

Israeli peace group urges Netanyahu to abide by redeployment commitments to Palestinians

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Israeli chapter of the International Alliance for Arab-Israeli Peace has urged Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to "advance rapidly and effectively in implementing his solemn commitment to a second and third redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank."

In a letter published on the eve of Mr. Netanyahu's talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton, the Israeli signatories to the Copenhagen Declaration of 1997 said a significant pull-back was an essential pre-requisite for establishing Palestinian control over a relatively large and contiguous sector of the West Bank in preparation for exercising the right to self-determination and statehood.

"The continuing delay and procrastination in carrying out Israel's commitment to rede-

ploy — hand in hand with the continuing humiliation and treatment of Palestinians and their leaders as second class people — are, in our considered view, not only a violation of internationally binding commitments but a serious mistake of potentially devastating dimensions," said the letter, a copy of which was received by the Jordan Times.

"It endangers not only the barely begun historical compromise between Jews and the Palestinian national movements but Israel's shaky peace with Egypt and Jordan as well."

Following is the full text of the letter.

"In January of last year, for the first time in the bitter history of the Arab-Israeli conflict, some fifty prominent Egyptian, Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian — politically inde-

pendent intellectuals, professionals and other opinion leaders — met in Copenhagen and unanimously decided to urge our several governments to redouble their efforts to achieve full and lasting peace.

"As a practical result of this meeting, a joint International Alliance for Arab-Israeli Peace was founded. Because of its unique character, the alliance drew public attention everywhere in the region and elsewhere. We have since held meetings with government officials, opinion leaders and politicians in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Amman and Cairo.

"On behalf of this unprecedented Arab-Israeli initiative and on the eve of your pivotal meeting with the president of the United States, we now appeal to you, Mr. Prime Minister, and urge you to advance

rapidly and effectively in implementing your solemn commitments, under a trilateral accord, to a second and third redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank.

"A significant pull-back was generally believed — and we believe rightly — to be an essential prerequisite that will enable the Palestinian Authority to establish its control over a relatively large and contiguous sector of the West Bank in preparation for the free exercise at a later date of its right to self-determination and the inevitable establishment of a Palestinian state.

"The continuing delay and procrastination in carrying out Israel's commitment to redeploy — hand in hand with the continuing humiliation and treatment of Palestinians and their leaders as second class

people — are, in our considered view, not only a violation of internationally binding commitments but a serious mistake of potentially devastating dimensions. It endangers not only the barely begun historical compromise between Jews and the Palestinian national movements but Israel's shaky peace with Egypt and Jordan as well.

"Mr. Prime Minister, we fear that in the past year the gulf between Israelis and Palestinians, instead of narrowing, has dangerously widened. It might be bridged, we feel sure, by more empathy and respect for the human dignity of the Palestinians. We call on you to be not only just but also wise, and seek justice not only from your perspective but also from that of the present adversaries who should become our allies tomorrow."



DEMONSTRATION IN BAGHDAD: Iraqi demonstrators waving pictures of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein shouts anti-U.S. slogans in Baghdad Tuesday. Thousands of men and women pledged to volunteer to defend Iraq in case of U.S. military attack, during a demonstration that blasted U.N. arms inspectors as 'agents of America' (AFP photo)

Egyptian police interrogate writer over 'blasphemous' books

CAIRO (AP) — Egyptian prosecutors have interrogated a lawyer-writer whose books were deemed blasphemous, a human rights organisation said Tuesday.

The move follows a spate of interrogations and private lawsuits against Egyptian individuals accused of insulting Islam.

The all-day interrogation of Khalil Abdul Karim took place Sunday, about a week after the country's leading Muslim authority, Al Azhar, reported to the government on 50 books

that it regarded as insulting to Islam, an Egyptian Human Rights Organisation official said.

The list included two books by Mr. Abdul Karim, which he wrote as studies of male-female relationships in early Islamic times and the social customs of the followers of the Prophet Mohammed.

Mr. Abdul Karim told the Associated Press that Al Azhar had decided the books were "deprecating and holding in contempt Semitic religions and attacking Islam and the

followers of the Prophet."

Mr. Abdul Karim said that state security prosecutors summoned him for questioning Sunday morning as if he were "a drug dealer."

"The investigators very politely told me that my books were viewed as being blasphemous," he said.

"They [Al Azhar scholars] want to control our thoughts without any regard to justice," Mr. Abdul Karim charged, adding that "this is not the way a democracy works."

Mr. Abdul Karim described his books as "historical studies."

Officials at Al Azhar, the highest seat of Sunni Islamic studies in the world, were not immediately available for comment. The Cairo Institute is known to have recommended bans on books.

Last year, acting on an Al Azhar recommendation, prosecutors interrogated the newspaper commentator, Sayed Al Qemni, about his book "God of this time" — a collection of articles and research papers on topics ranging from Islamic

history to the influence of Islamists over society.

The move against Mr. Abdul Karim follows private lawsuits filed by Islamists against several Egyptian writers and an actress, who were accused of insulting Islam. In one case, a court declared a university professor to be an apostate and divorced him from his wife, ruling that his books violated Islamic principles.

Authorities have ordered Mr. Abdul Karim's publisher not to distribute his books until the investigation is completed.

Palestinian human rights group denies persecution of Christians

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Christians living under Palestinian National Authority (PNA) rule do not face systematic persecution, a Palestinian human rights group said Tuesday, dismissing claims by the Israeli government and some evangelical Christians.

The Palestinian Human Rights Monitoring Group (PHRMG), which is often sharply critical of PNA's human rights record, said reports alleging persecution were a "deliberate manipulation" aimed at defaming the PNA.

The group convened a news conference Tuesday to release its new report. "For the record: The 'persecution' of Christians under the Palestinian Authority."

"We believe that the Christians of Palestine are not being persecuted at all," said Charles Lenchner, a member of the group.

The report said the allegations of persecution were being made by the International Christian

Embassy, a staunchly pro-Israeli group based in Jerusalem, and by the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. The Christian Embassy alleged Palestinian converts to Christianity are being systematically harassed by the PNA. It cited cases involving several recent converts to Christianity, including Mohammed Baker, an engineer from the Nablus area, who was arrested by Palestinian police last summer.

The Christian Embassy said Mr. Baker was targeted because of his faith. However, the Palestinian human rights group said Tuesday that Mr. Baker was arrested during a sweep of land dealers suspected of having sold land to Jews.

"The charges against him may be false, but this does not mean that the real reason for his arrest was his Christianity," the report said.

Representatives of the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem visited Mr. Baker in a Nablus prison. A consulate official, who spoke on condition of

anonymity, said Mr. Baker acknowledged having served as a witness during a sale of West Bank land to Jews. However, the Christian Embassy said Tuesday it stood by its allegations. David Parsons, a spokesman for the group, said the Palestinian human rights activists were losing their credibility.

In its report, the human rights group took a look at five cases it said had repeatedly come up in media reports, and concluded that in two of the cases, there was evidence of harassment.

In one of the cases, a 25-year-old Palestinian convert was arrested repeatedly on suspicion of collaboration with Israel and in a second, a 31-year-old was ostracised in his overwhelmingly Muslim village.

"The human rights violations are occurring at a local level, and not as a result of Palestinian Authority policies against Christians," the report said, adding that it has found no other evidence of harassment.

Police find getaway cars

(Continued from page 1)

identity of the killers. A neighbour of George told the Jordan Times that Ms. Lidaiki was working as a cook for the deceased.

Security officials said they interrogated several Iraqis in the past few days but no one was detained.

Director of Forensic Medicine at the Police Department Mounim Al Hadid said that his department carried out autopsies on the eight victims and a report was sent to the head of the team that investigates the crime, Brigadier Hisham Nsour.

However, Dr. Hadid said that he believed "the stabbing was carried out by professional murderers."

He said the victims were brutally stabbed and that each victim received more than ten stab wounds in different parts of their bodies. Nazmi Ochi, a brother of Namiir Ochi who was killed in the attack, denied news reports that he and his brother were doing business with the Iraqi government.

"We have nothing to do with the Iraqi government. We stopped doing business with Baghdad since 1989," said Mr. Ochi.

He said he met George only

one time in Amman, through mutual friends.

"I do not know who is behind the murder and I have told the investigators all what I know," Mr. Ochi told the Jordan Times.

He said that during the seven-year-old U.N. sanctions, he sent a number of consignments of humanitarian aid, consisting of milk and medicine, to Iraq and that he received nothing in return from the Iraqi government.

"It was merely a humanitarian help to our people."

Mr. Ochi, who is a British citizen, runs worldwide investments, worth \$1.2 billion, in the medicine and food industries, a sugar factory, a fleet of twelve planes and several financial institutions.

Mr. Ochi said his brother, who was married to a Lebanese woman, lived and worked in Lebanon for the past several years.

He said that another brother, Nasser, was executed by the Iraqi government in 1986 after he was convicted of attempting to bribe officials.

He said that his slain brother, Namiir, was staying at the house of George, "with whom he used to stay when he visits Jordan."

Jordanian universities should make practical proposals to help develop Kingdom's regions — Crown Prince

(Continued from page 1)

regional and global levels and not because the traditional universities' missions have failed to achieve their objectives," Prince Hassan added.

Prince Hassan lauded Mu'ta University's role in serving the local community in the south and for establishing a centre for studies of the southern regions.

He pointed to the need for comprehensive studies on the local community level and for strategic planning to deal with problems before they crop up emphasising the need for change and for adopting total qualitative management (TQM).

The Crown Prince reviewed the number of students enrolled in the universities in the past two years, noting that those enrolled in humanities totalled 19,349 and those in trade and business administration 17,089. He said those enrolled in engineering were relatively few, numbering 982. However, the number of those enrolling in areas considered very important for Jordan is not encouraging, he said, citing agriculture students, who were 3,343.

Prince Hassan called on the universities to study and grasp the role of informatics and information technology in education and to adopt convincing methods based on information and data and free of the sense of the ego and selfishness.

"Our sole option lies in building a national economy capable of competing in world markets and adjusting to local

and international developments," Prince Hassan stressed. He said among the primary requirements in this respect "is to base our economic policies on continuous interaction and dialogue and to build from the base gradually rising to the top."

He emphasised the importance of planning and drawing up a national strategy enabling Jordan to absorb economic and social changes resulting from the information revolution.

Prince Hassan said the task force should embark on preparing plans taking into consideration three dimensions — natural resources, economic resources and human resources — so that a comprehensive plan be complete in order to help improve the quality of the people's life.

Prince Hassan said investment in education and vocational training builds manpower capital. "Perhaps one of the major challenges that will face us in the future lies in how to benefit from this investment and how to increase production and attain efficiency in management," he said.

Prince Hassan stressed that ideal investment lies in concentrating on the quality of the graduates and in adjusting university programmes to the requirements of the labour market.

He recalled the many visits he made to Jordanian students in different universities around the world and their desire to be affiliated with Jordanian universities in order to learn about their country's requirements so that they can adjust

their training towards serving the Kingdom.

Prince Hassan urged the universities to recruit and train cadres that can achieve this transformation and deal with modern technology.

He asked them to adopt methods of training Jordanians in dealing with information technology, stressing that this can only be achieved by "freeing ourselves from the concept of the universities' traditional message."

"Sustainable education strategies, life-long learning, self-education and distance education can help us promote information technology and train individuals in their use," he said.

He called on the task force to hold periodical meetings at state-run universities to discuss and follow up on the important subjects that were discussed at the Mu'ta University meeting.

The Crown Prince underlined the importance of research methodology and preparing university students and teachers for work by learning about value systems on which these priorities are based.

He said that people shouldering responsibility should be armed with ethics and should have positive attitudes towards objective work methodologies.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

- 14:10Jonny Quest
- 14:30French Programmes
- 16:15Prayers
- 16:30Believe and Behave
- 17:00Border Town
- 17:30The Finder
- 18:00Neighbours
- 18:30News Headlines
- 18:35Step By Step
- 19:00Le Journal
- 19:15Ramadan Talks
- 19:35Nature of Healing
- 20:00The Upper Hand
- 20:30Challenges
- 21:10Kung Fu
- 22:00News in English
- 22:30A Woman of Independent Means
- 23:15Country Music
- 23:59Islam in a Changing World

PRAYER TIMES

- 05:10Fajr
- 06:31(Sunrise)Doha
- 11:47Dhuhr
- 14:39Asr
- 17:03Maghreb
- 18:24Isha

CHURCHES

- St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
- Assemblies of God Church Tel. 632785.
- St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Tel. 773111-19

Church of the Annunciation

- De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
- Terra Sancta Church Tel. 622366
- Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
- Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
- Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
- St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
- Armenian International Church Tel. 5516245
- Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 824328.
- German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 688404
- The Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
- Church of Nazarene Tel. 675691.
- The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
- English-speaking Latin Catholics Parish Tel. 614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology. Skies will be sunny with temperatures rising gradually and winds southeasterly moderate.

- In Aqaba, it will be warm and sunny, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.
- Amman05/13
- Aqaba12/21

Deserts.....04/14

- Jordan Valley10/19
- Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 10, Aqaba 19 Humidity readings: Amman 69 per cent, Aqaba 42 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NIGHT DUTY

- Dr. Mukhlis Mazharab820425
- Dr. Wissam Hazyin748563
- Dr. Munther Al Qaraini779959
- Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyim 620115
- Firas pharmacy661912
- Ferdows pharmacy890280
- Al Asema pharmacy637055
- Al Salam pharmacy636730
- Yacoub pharmacy644945
- Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
- Nairoukh pharmacy623672
- Najib pharmacy847632
- IRBID: Dr. Ghazi Ta'anneh250080
- Al Quds pharmacy(-)
- ZARQA: Dr. Salah Safarini987565
- Khalifeh pharmacy985417

EMERGENCIES

- Food Control Centre 637111
- Civil Defence Department 661111
- Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341

Civil Defence Emergency 199

- Rescue Police 192. 621111. 637777
- Fire Brigade617101
- Blood Bank775121
- Highway Police843402
- Traffic Police896390
- Public Security Department 630321
- Hotel Complaints605800
- Price Complaints661176
- Water and Sewerage Complaints897467
- Amman Municipality Complaints787111
- Telephone Information (directory assistance)121
- Overseas Calls010230
- Central Amman Telephone Repairs623101
- Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
- Jordan Television773111
- Radio Jordan774111
- Water Authority680100
- Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
- Electric Power Company 636381
- RJ Flight Information 44-53200
- Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

- AMMAN: Hussein Medical Centre

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport. Tel. 44153200 where it should always be verified. Information on other flights are supplied on phone 44 (52700) or 44153250.

ARRIVALS

- Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
- 07:25Damascus (RJ)
- 08:05Larnaca (RJ)
- 08:35Jeddah (RJ)
- 08:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
- 15:00New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
- 16:50Istanbul (RJ)
- 17:45Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
- 18:10Rome (RJ)
- 18:30London, Berlin (RJ)
- 18:45Paris, Brussels (RJ)
- 23:10Beirut (RJ)
- 00:05Cairo (RJ)
- 01:55Zurich (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

- 05:50Bucharest (RO)
- 09:30Cairo (MS)
- 09:30Al 'Arish

DEPARTURES

- Royal Wings (RW) Flights
- 07:45Aqaba (RW)
- 09:05Amman (QAIA) (RW)
- 09:50Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
- 17:20Tel Aviv (RW)
- 18:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
- 21:20Aqaba (RW)
- 22:50Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

Other Flights

- 08:25Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
- 09:45Rome (RJ)
- 10:40Berlin, London (RJ)
- 11:00Istanbul (RJ)
- 13:30Aqaba, Zurich (add) (RJ)
- 19:30Colombo (RJ)
- 19:35Beirut (RJ)
- 20:05Riyadh, Dhahran (RJ)
- 20:10Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights

- 00:35Amsterdam (KL)
- 01:55Bucharest (RO)
- 06:35Larnaca (CY)
- 08:00Beirut (ME)
- 08:25London (BA)
- 10:30Cairo (MS)
- 10:30Al 'Arish (add) (RJ)
- 11:15Al Hudaidah, Aden (Y)
- 12:00Kuwait (KU)
- 12:00Jeddah (SV)
- 14:10Tunis (TU)
- 14:20Sharjah (AH)
- 15:15Bahrain, Muscat (GF)
- 15:10Tel Aviv (LY)
- 15:30Doha (QR)
- 15:50Vienna (OS)
- 19:30Abu Dhabi, Karachi (PK)
- 23:55Damascus, Paris (AF)

ROYAL WINGS (RW)

- 06:45Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
- 08:15Aqaba (RW)
- 09:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
- 16:45Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
- 17:55Tel Aviv (RW)
- 20:30Amman (QAIA) (RW)
- 21:50Aqaba (RW)

NEWS IN BRIEF

King Hussein II arrived in Jordan from his exile in Saudi Arabia. He is expected to return to Jordan soon. The King's return is a significant event for the Jordanian people.

WHAT'S GOING ON

Children's Day is celebrated in Amman. The event was organized by the Ministry of Education and involved many schools and children.

CONCERT

A concert by the Amman Philharmonic Orchestra will be held at the Amman Cultural Centre. The concert will feature a variety of classical music.

LECTURE

A lecture on the history of Jordan will be given by a guest speaker at the Amman Cultural Centre. The lecture is free of charge.

ture" by Jean - Marc Margiante at the French Cultural Centre. Jabai Weibdeh at 7:00

Britain and China agree to post-Hong Kong 'fresh start'

BEIJING (AFP) — British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook met with Chinese President Jiang Zemin here Tuesday and agreed to a fresh start in relations greatly troubled in the run-up to the handover of Hong Kong.

"Both President Jiang and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen made it clear that China offers a fresh start to its relations with Britain," Mr. Cook said before leaving the Chinese capital for Hong Kong. "The British government is keen to accept a fresh start with China. We want it to be a fresh start down a broad road which is wide enough for us to develop relations on the many matters of common interest to us both," he added.

Rounding off a two-day visit to the mainland, Mr. Cook was received in the exclusive Zhongnanhai compound near Tiananmen Square where Mr. Jiang and the rest of China's top leadership reside.

The Chinese president accepted a 12-name list of imprisoned Chinese dissi-

dents from Mr. Cook, which included student activist Wang Dan, and reiterated that China was willing to enter into non-confrontational dialogue on human rights.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman said meanwhile that Beijing had invited the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights to make a goodwill visit to China, although the itinerary had yet to be fixed.

Mr. Qian told Mr. Cook Monday that the invitation to Mary Robinson was open-ended, apparently part of a fresh offensive to win over critics of China's human rights policies.

He also said that China was seriously looking at a second U.N. charter — on political and civil rights — following its signing of the U.N. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Mr. Jiang was quoted as saying that Mr. Cook's visit, the first high-level diplomatic meeting between Britain and China since Hong Kong returned to

Chinese rule on July 1, had moved bilateral relations onto a new plateau. Prior to Hong Kong's change of sovereignty, bilateral relations slipped dangerously over a diplomatic stand-off on the territory's political future.

In marked contrast, Mr. Cook received a warm welcome from both Mr. Jiang and Mr. Qian, who praised the "positive attitude" adopted by Britain's new Labour government, which has been in power since May.

Even sharp words last week from Beijing over an official meeting between exiled Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng and a Foreign Office official in London failed to sour the atmosphere.

Mr. Qian and Mr. Cook also discussed Iraq, with the Chinese foreign minister putting his full support behind the United Nations and giving short shrift to Iraq's efforts to have U.N. oil sanctions lifted. Other issues covered were environ-

ment and trade, following the visit last week by British President of the Board of Trade Margaret Beckett.

"Qian Qichen made an extremely positive statement about admitting British financial companies to the Chinese market, and confirmed that China was favourably considering a licence for a major British insurance firm," Mr. Cook said.

"Britain has a distinctive strength in its financial sector which has much to contribute to the development of China," he added.

Mr. Cook visited an environmental education project in Beijing Tuesday afternoon and was scheduled to fly to Hong Kong later in the day. There, he will meet the territory's Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa, representatives of the financial sector and leading democracy advocates.

Mr. Cook's visit is expected to pave the way for a trip here by British Prime Minister Tony Blair in September.



Chinese President Jiang Zemin (right) gestures as he meets with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook (left) in the leaders' compound, Zhongnanhai in Beijing (Reuters photo)

Worst cold wave in decade compounds Chinese quake victims' woes

BEIJING (AFP) — The worst cold wave in a decade sweeping parts of China has added to the woes of people displaced by the Jan. 10 earthquake northeast of Beijing that left 50 dead, official reports said Tuesday.

The mercury plunged to minus 35 degrees Celsius in the area where 44,000 people are sheltering in makeshift housing since the earthquake damaged 136,000 houses.

The quake, measuring 6.2 on the Richter scale left 12,000 injured, 1,200 of them seriously, in the mountainous region some 220 kilometres from Beijing.

Meanwhile, the government of Australia announced it would contribute 75,000 Australian dollars (\$49,500) in emergency relief.

The aid, aimed at providing for the immediate needs of villagers whose homes were destroyed in the disaster, will

be distributed via the U.N. Development Programme, a statement from the Australian embassy here said.

Monday, the official Xinhua news agency said 11,000 makeshift houses had gone up for the quake victims after the tents put up earlier proved woefully inadequate to keep out the cold.

"Rain and snowfall hampered the smooth transport of goods, the most important part of the country's relief endeavour," Xinhua said Tuesday.

It said police had put up roadblocks and had undertaken snowclearing and added that after the quake, 2,000 policemen were sent to the area for emergency work and to maintain order.

"No criminal cases or serious traffic accidents have happened since the 6.2 trembler," Xinhua said.

In Beijing the mercury fell to minus 14.2 degrees Celsius

overnight Saturday, the lowest night temperature recorded since 1988 and during the day Sunday, it failed to rise above minus 7.2 degrees Celsius, also the lowest daytime temperature in a decade, China Daily said. The lowest temperature recorded in Beijing was on February 22, 1966, when it was minus 27.4 degrees Celsius.

China Daily said the current cold spell should soon give way to fine weather.

The Chinese Red Cross has already received a total of 20.77 million yuan (\$2.4 million) in donations following an appeal for international and domestic help.

The Red Cross in Hong Kong alone has received 11.92 million yuan in donations. Several other countries including Japan, the United States, Germany, France and Britain have also contributed to the relief effort.

Dissident may be moved to Beijing

BEIJING (AFP) — China's most prominent political prisoner, Wang Dan, may be moved to Beijing from a jail 500 kilometres away, his parents said Tuesday.

The head of Jinzhou prison, where Wang Dan has been held since the end of 1996, told him last month that he was going to make a report to concerned departments to see if the dissident could be moved to a Beijing jail, Mr. Wang's father said.

Wang Xiancheng told AFP that it would be the first time officials would be reacting to the request for transfer made more than six months ago.

Officials at the ministry of justice and the Jinzhou prison in northeast China's Liaoning province declined comment on Wang Xiancheng's remarks.

Wang Dan's parents last saw their son on Jan. 1, they said their son, a top leader of the pro-democracy demonstrations at Tiananmen Square in 1989, suffers from a sore throat, stomach disorder and vertigo.

They want him moved to Beijing to undergo proper medical tests.

Chinese prisoners are normally expected to be held close to their hometowns to facilitate family visits.

Wang Dan, 28, was handed an 11-year prison term in 1996 for "subversion" after he had been held incommunicado for 14 months. He had already been jailed for four years following the Tiananmen crackdown.

The mantle of China's most prominent political detainee fell on him after Wei Jingsheng was paroled and allowed to leave for the United States in November.

Meanwhile, dissident Lin Xinsu has written an open letter to the Communist Party central committee and to President Jiang Zemin asking for all political detainees to be freed on the occasion of the Chinese new year on Jan. 28.

He also asked them to improve the living conditions of the prisoners, stop persecuting Chinese citizens and allow those exiled abroad to return.

Mr. Lin, 54, is a specialist in traditional Chinese medicine based in the southeastern city of Fuzhou.

German travel agent hangs himself over H. Kong tourism slump

HONG KONG (AFP) — A German travel agent committed suicide after his firm ran into financial trouble because of the slump in Hong Kong's tourism industry, reports said Tuesday.

Hans Jorg Schult, 52, was found hanging in his office by staff when they arrived for work Monday. Suicide notes were also found.

Staff said Mr. Schult was one million Hong Kong dollars (\$130,000) in debt and had not paid his employees for two months.

The number of staff had also been cut from six to two because of the decline in tourist arrivals since Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule last July, they told reporters.

The firm, which Mr. Schult bought more than a decade ago, mainly catered for European visitors.

Hong Kong has been battling a slump in tourism since it was handed over by Britain to China.

Analysts have blamed the regional financial crisis, "handover fatigue" and the outbreak of the so-called "bird flu" here, which has claimed six lives, for the drop in tourism.

U.S. hints at discussing end of embargo on arms sales to China

BEIJING (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen hinted Tuesday about the possible lifting of the arms-sale embargo imposed on China since 1989.

Questioned during a news conference, Mr. Cohen said the issue had been raised during his talks with Chinese officials, who particularly sought parts for U.S. helicopters bought in the early 1980s.

"I'm sure there will be discussions (on the subject) in future," the defence secretary said.

"I would hope there would be progress made on issues that are of concern to the Congress of the United States and President (Bill) Clinton in the fields of human rights," Mr. Cohen said.

"Assuming that progress is made I'm sure we can also make progress dealing with the removal of certain sanctions," he said.

Sales of military material to China are banned under sanctions imposed by the U.S. administration following the massacre of pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square by the Chinese army in June 1989. The embargo is also upheld by members of the European Union, but British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook — who was also in Beijing — down-

played any possibility that Europe would lift its sanctions.

"We did not discuss it, and I wouldn't myself think it was an immediate prospect," he told reporters.

The embargo has dealt a blow to U.S. armaments industries.

At the Aviation Expo/China 97 air show in Beijing last October, Chinese military officials contacted representatives of the U.S. company Sikorsky in an attempt to obtain spare parts for 24 Sikorsky S-70C Black Hawk helicopters bought in 1984 and 1985.

They also sought to place an order for new equipment. The U.S. sanctions, coded "PL 101-246", cover in particular 12 key parts for the helicopter, including its engine and avionics.

Virtually all the helicopters, which were assigned to Tibet and Xinjiang, have been grounded for years.

According to the New York Times, Mr. Cohen asked Mr. Clinton before leaving for Beijing to make an exception for such parts.

U.S. officials quoted by the New York Times said the proposition was considered premature and was rejected by the White House, though the administration was studying the possibility of relaxing sanctions.

UNITA wants revision of accords on leaders' safety

LUANDA (AFP) — Angola's former UNITA rebels, preparing for talks between their chief Jonas Savimbi and President Jose Eduardo dos Santos, said Tuesday they want revision of arrangements for their leaders' security.

UNITA's General Artur Vinama, responsible for preparing talks between the longtime civil-war foes, demanded a revision of arrangements assigning two bodyguards to each former rebel official.

Gen. Vinama also insisted that the "special case" of Mr. Savimbi, head of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), be adapted to the "circumstances" — the planned meeting between Mr. Savimbi and Dos Santos.

No date for that meeting has yet been set, but sources on both sides said it could take place at the end of February.

Mr. Savimbi has met Dos Santos four times since his rebels and the governing People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) signed a peace pact in November 1994 to end almost two decades of civil war, but he has refused to go to the capital Luanda on the grounds that his safety cannot be guaranteed.

"We will negotiate and find a satisfactory solution for everybody," Gen. Vinama declared.

The UNITA general arrived in Luanda Monday evening at the head of a delegation of officers responsible for Mr. Savimbi's personal security. First talks with government officials on the issue were due Tuesday.

The talks could also be a forum for negotiations on the return of a top UNITA delegation to Luanda.

The ex-rebels mostly quit the capital after civil war broke out with renewed force when they contested the outcome of general elections they lost late in 1992, which had been held under a first U.N.-backed peace plan.

The Luanda government insists that the total demilitarisation of UNITA, which has sought to retain control of some resource-rich provinces in the southern African country since signing the Lusaka Peace accords in 1994, is a precondition for the return of the movement's leaders to the capital.

San Sebastian normally recognises cinema stars — it has a film festival every September. This time, however, de Niro kept a low profile.

De Niro left San Sebastian, in northern Spain, the next day. He had spent the New Year holiday period with an American friend who is married to a Spanish woman.

San Sebastian normally recognises cinema stars — it has a film festival every September. This time, however, de Niro kept a low profile.

'British citizens are last to become Aussies'

SYDNEY (AFP) — Former residents of Britain and the Commonwealth are the last to become Australian citizens, Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock said Tuesday.

Mr. Ruddock, unveiling a series of citizenship booklets, said an estimated one million Australian residents were not citizens — most of them former British subjects who came to Australia before 1984.

"It is not the English that I am pointing at," Mr. Ruddock told reporters. "It is all former British subjects. It can be people from places like Cyprus, Malta, it could be people from places like Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong."

"It is not a factor of Britishness," he said, explaining that it was more a factor of citizens of the former British empire being entitled to British subject status.

Laws in 1984 removed certain rights, including the right to vote, from arriving British and Commonwealth residents who did not take

up citizenship.

The law change had "grandfathered" the existing arrangements, allowing those already in Australia to retain their privileges.

But he said an estimated 50,000 British and Commonwealth nationals still took out Australian citizenship each year, he said.

"When you look at the large numbers of enquiries that we are receiving, something of the order of 200,000 a year, I suspect in time the people who don't have citizenship now will be very much smaller than the million we have acknowledged are there at the moment," he said.

Reports have also suggested that some residents from Scotland and Ireland had refused for many years to become Australian citizens because it would have meant an oath of allegiance to the British Crown, which they were not prepared to give.

However, the oath of allegiance was recently dropped from the citizenship ceremony.

De Niro shops for baby clothes

SAN SEBASTIAN, Spain (AFP) — Robert de Niro has been discreetly buying baby clothes in Spain.

The actor popped into a store in San Sebastian just before it was due to close, after a telephone call from New York moments earlier asking staff to stay open a while longer.

"He was direct, nice and very pleasant," a manager at the shop said after deciding to break their silence over his visit on Jan. 3.

They said that soon after the telephone call came, de Niro appeared in a chauffeur-driven car and accompanied by a pregnant woman. They bought a few items of clothes, paid by credit card, and left.

De Niro left San Sebastian, in northern Spain, the next day. He had spent the New Year holiday period with an American friend who is married to a Spanish woman.

San Sebastian normally recognises cinema stars — it has a film festival every September. This time, however, de Niro kept a low profile.



A young Indian boy peers out from the top of a Congress party campaign truck featuring the photograph of Sonia Gandhi framed by former Indian Premier Indira Gandhi and Sonia's slain husband Rajiv Gandhi (AFP photo)



US Defence Secretary William Cohen (left) meets Japan's Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto at the latter's official residence in Tokyo after arriving from Beijing (Reuters photo)

Cohen in Tokyo to discuss U.S.-Japan defence ties, Asian troubles

TOKYO (AFP) — U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen briefed Japanese Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto Tuesday about efforts to strengthen military ties with China and security in Southeast Asia.

Mr. Cohen met Mr. Hashimoto shortly after arriving from Beijing, where he capped a three-day visit with a meeting with Chinese President Jiang Zemin.

Tokyo is Mr. Cohen's sixth stop on a seven-country Asian tour that has also taken him to Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand at a time of economic turmoil. He travels to South Korea Wednesday.

Mr. Cohen told reporters on the flight to Japan that he had "reassuring" words for Mr. Hashimoto about his meetings in Southeast

Asia about the Asian economic crisis and China, where Washington is seeking expanded ties with the military.

During his stay in Beijing, Mr. Cohen defended the updated U.S. alliance with Japan as crucial to regional stability and assured Beijing that Washington did not seek to isolate or block its rise as a regional power.

U.S. officials who attended the meetings said the Chinese did not make an issue of the U.S. military presence in Asia nor the new defence guidelines with Japan, which Beijing has criticised in the past.

In a speech to military officers, Mr. Cohen called the U.S. network of alliances with Japan and other countries in Asia "the first pillar" of the U.S.

security strategy in the region.

But Washington believes closer military ties with Beijing will ease the level of mistrust and prod China to be more open about its own military plans and intentions in the region.

Mr. Cohen told reporters Washington seeks a "modest" step-by-step improvement in relations with the Chinese military to avoid raising expectations too high and thereby running the risk of them being dashed.

"On the one hand you have people in the United States who may not want to see the relationship proceed so fast — they want to see improvements in the area of human rights," Mr. Cohen said.

"There is also the issue of how far, how fast should

the relationship go," he said.

"I've always subscribed to taking very small steps where everybody is confident that the next step is positive, so you don't have these spikes in your relationship where it is up one day and down the next."

Mr. Cohen's arrival in Japan comes amid continuing problems over Okinawa and lingering anti-U.S. sentiment there following the 1995 rape of a 12-year old schoolgirl by U.S. servicemen stationed on the southern island prefecture.

He also is expected to inaugurate a "comprehensive planning mechanism" that sets out how to adjust laws and map out plans for defence cooperation between the two countries.

The revisions to the 1978

bilateral guidelines on defence cooperation identify broader roles for Japan in providing rear area support for U.S. forces in peacetime and in regional crises, according to U.S. officials.

It includes the use of Japanese minesweepers in international waters to keep sea lanes open, but does not commit Japan to specific courses of action in crises or to provide access to specific ports and airfields.

The revised guidelines have provoked fears among some here of a Japanese militarist revival.

Japan's post-World War II pacifist constitution limits the country's armed forces to a self-defence role and bans them from fighting abroad with allies.

Battle to regain Sierra Leone diamond town claims 130 lives

FREETOWN (AFP) — Sierra Leone's military junta Tuesday said a fierce battle for a strategic diamond town claimed some 130 lives, about half of them those of Kamajors tribal militiamen who briefly seized it.

Witnesses reported dozens of headless corpses littering areas around Tongo Field, taken by Kamajors loyal to ousted President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah before troops of the junta recovered control of it Sunday.

Junta spokesman Allieu Kamara stated Tuesday that about half the casualties in the Tongo Field region were Kamajors. About 100 reported deaths were in the battle for the town Sunday, he said, following the killing of 30 people Saturday.

State radio Tuesday, meanwhile, accused Nigerian soldiers of the west African intervention force in Sierra Leone, ECOMOG, of "being behind Kamajor atrocities on defenceless civilians."

"The fighting in Tongo Field has been perpetrated by the Nigerians who are

aiding and abetting the Kamajors," the radio said, quoting a defence spokesman. Lieutenant Colonel John Milton.

Since the army seized power in a coup last May, the ECOMOG force acting in the name of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has deployed thousands of troops Leone in an effort to restore Mr. Kabbah to power.

Nigerian forces have clashed several times with junta troops and also carried out air raids on the capital, claiming to be enforcing an economic embargo imposed against the junta by ECOWAS and the United Nations.

However, Nigeria's own military regime — pledged to hand over to elected civilians next October — has come under strong criticism for far exceeding its mandate in Sierra Leone by excessive use of force.

Witnesses who fled the fighting in Tongo Field spoke of dozens of civilian corpses, some headless, some with amputated feet, others gagged, on roads out of the town.

"I lost count of the number and many of them had their faces buried in the muddy soil," said one man reached by telephone in Kenema, 240 kilometres east of the capital.

Reports suggested at least some of the civilian killings were the result of old scores related to land and chieftaincy disputes.

The military regime of Lieutenant-Colonel Johnny Koroma has pledged to restore power to the elected civilian authorities next April, in a pact reached under the ECOWAS aegis.

Mr. Kabbah, elected in March 1996, was ousted amid ongoing strife in the West African country which had been wracked by a civil war since 1991 between previous regimes and rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), who largely rallied to Koroma's junta.

Kamajor traditional tribal hunters have formed a powerful militia force at odds with the military regime in the mineral-rich west African nation, once also a tourist haven renowned for its splendid beaches.

U.S. health authorities to regulate human cloning

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration will regulate human cloning and consider unauthorised experiments with the procedure a violation of federal law, The Washington Post said Tuesday.

"Through the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act we do have the authority to regulate human cloning, and we are prepared to assert that authority," Acting FDA Commissioner Michael Friedman said in an interview.

His comments confirmed Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala's statement to CBS television on Jan. 11 that the U.S. government would not allow a Chicago scientist to go ahead with plans to clone humans.

Mr. Friedman said anybody who wants to carry out human cloning experiments legally must file a formal application with the FDA, which would then undertake a lengthy review.

The FDA will initiate legal action against anyone who does such experiments without filing an application, Mr. Friedman said.

Ever since Chicago physicist Richard Seed said this month he plans to clone human beings, national and international debate on the procedure has raged, with the U.S. government taking steps to head off what it considers a potentially immoral procedure.

President Bill Clinton has slapped a five-year ban on federal money being used in cloning experiments and is urging Congress to pass a bill banning the procedure altogether.

In the first accord of its kind, 19 European countries have signed an agreement banning human cloning.

Mr. Friedman said that after weeks of reviewing the issue, the FDA had determined that the kinds of manipulations involved in human cloning presented "serious health and safety issues" for the foetus and the mother.

Another FDA official said scientists interested in carrying out human cloning experiments would have to file an "investigational new drug application," which drug companies have to submit before testing new medicines on people.

Mr. Seed said he plans to open cloning clinics to help infertile couples in the United States and abroad.

Yeltsin needs to keep reform duo — Nemtsov

MOSCOW (AFP) — The Russian government needs to keep its duo of young reformers in 1998 to press on with its economic programme before new elections, First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov said in an interview published Tuesday.

"The president (Boris Yeltsin) and prime minister (Viktor Chernomyrdin) will understand that if everything is undone now and a new government formed, it will simply be a waste of time," Mr. Nemtsov told the Izvestia daily.

Mr. Nemtsov, who was appointed first deputy prime minister along with Anatoly Chubais last March, said 1998 was "the last year for normal work."

"Next year the elections will start — first parliamentary, then presidential. I think the good sense of the president and prime minister is more decisive today, whatever trends were left over from last year," Mr. Nemtsov said.

However, he admitted that he and Mr. Chubais had seen their positions weakened by a scandal which rocked the government in November and sparked rumours that they may be sacked.

"There is no smoke without fire. Clearly, one cannot come through last year's series of scandals unscathed," Mr. Nemtsov said.

Three of Mr. Chubais' close allies were sacked from the government and Mr. Chubais lost the finance ministry portfolio after Russian media reported that they had received lavish fees for a book on privatisation.

Mr. Nemtsov was not implicated in the corruption allegations, but the

scandal was a blow to the reformers' credibility, coinciding with widespread discontent over huge public sector wage arrears.

Mr. Nemtsov told Izvestia that Mr. Yeltsin had appointed him for two years, and "the president has never deceived me."

"I don't think he's going to deceive me either, so I'll work for two years (in the government), and then we'll see," he said.

Mr. Nemtsov also defended Mr. Chubais, 42, describing him as "an honest man who keeps his promises," and "one of the country's best organisers."

The Communist-led

opposition in the Lower House of Parliament has repeatedly urged Mr. Yeltsin to sack Mr. Chubais, whom they revile for having masterminded Russia's controversial privatisation programme.

Despite a scolding from Mr. Yeltsin, Mr. Chernomyrdin defended the government's record Monday, saying it had cleared the huge wage backlog by a Jan. 1 deadline imposed by the president.

Mr. Yeltsin praised Mr. Yeltsin Tuesday as "a very strong man with powerful magnetism."

Mr. Yeltsin, who turns 67 on Feb. 1, arrived back at the Kremlin Monday from a two-week holiday, which followed a two-week convalescence at a sanatorium last month after contracting a chest infection.

Mr. Nemtsov, 38, reiterated that he would not run for the presidency in the 2000 elections, despite positive public opinion ratings.

Mr. Nemtsov said Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov had much better chances of winning crucial regional support in the presidential race than Mr. Chernomyrdin, but added that both would withdraw from the race if Mr. Yeltsin opted to try for a third term.

Mr. Nemtsov has not previously voiced support for Mr. Luzhkov, who is a major critic of Mr. Chubais. Mr. Luzhkov, an ally of Mr. Yeltsin, has refused to be drawn on whether he harbours presidential ambitions.

During Mr. Yeltsin's absence, Mr. Chernomyrdin appeared to have curbed the powers of Mr. Nemtsov and Mr. Chubais and improved relations with the lower house.

to deceive me either, so I'll work for two years (in the government), and then we'll see," he said.

Mr. Nemtsov also defended Mr. Chubais, 42, describing him as "an honest man who keeps his promises," and "one of the country's best organisers."

The Communist-led

Yeltsin fears some CIS members want to quit

MOSCOW (R) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin expressed concern Tuesday that some former Soviet republics wanted to quit the Commonwealth of Independent States.

"If we sum up 1997, we have to say it — we've let the CIS issue slip away... some have even made up their mind to quit the CIS," Mr. Yeltsin said in televised comments to Valery Serov, a deputy prime minister in charge of CIS affairs.

Defending his work with the loose grouping set up after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Mr. Serov said: "A lot has been done — with your help and with your personal participation."

Mr. Yeltsin, who returned to work Monday after a two-week vacation, called for more active development of ties within the CIS, which includes all 15 former Soviet republics except Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

"It is time for a very active period in the work of the CIS, all this year will be very active in this respect," he said.

Mr. Serov said all of the leaders of CIS countries backed Mr. Yeltsin's efforts and dismissed the suggestion that any wanted to leave.

"All responsible politicians, heads of states understand the value of the CIS and its meaning, there is no talk of quitting," Russian news agencies quoted Mr. Serov as saying.

The CIS is divided into states such as Russia which promote the group and others whose support is lukewarm.

Many CIS states openly criticised Russia for its domination of the grouping at a CIS summit in Moldova last October, and a summit planned for January was postponed.

Members have also criticised attempts to build blocs within the CIS, such as Russia's moves towards union with its Slav neighbour Belarus.

Earlier this month, the presidents of five former Soviet republics in central Asia, struggling to reduce their dependence on Moscow, agreed that each state would decide independently on its participation in the CIS.

The presidents of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, meeting in the Turkmen capital Ashgabat, seemed to see little future for the CIS.

They vowed more economic and political cooperation

Havel reelection leaves Czechs cool

PRAGUE (AFP) — "For me, President Havel was never a national hero," says 29-year-old Loesmot Rodi, standing at the end of Wenceslas Square, heart of the 1989 bloodless Velvet Revolution which ended Communist rule in what was then Czechoslovakia.

"He was a good human being in 1989, and he is still a good human being. But there are perhaps more important questions for our country."

The comments by the young entrepreneur — Mr. Rodi runs his own computer graphics company — are typical of the reaction to Mr. Havel's reelection Tuesday as president of the Czech Republic for a second five-year term.

The 61-year-old former dissident playwright was opposed by only two marginal candidates, a Communist and a far-right leader, in the parliamentary vote to keep him as the nation's largely symbolic head of state.

His reelection by deputies in an ornate hall in Prague Castle was pushed down the front pages of Czech newspapers Tuesday by the threat by caretaker Premier Josef Troskovsky to resign. The political turmoil since the government was forced to quit two months ago has dominated the media for weeks.

"President Havel is good for our country. He helps us to be noticed by other countries. He is a good man," says Jana Levy, a 24-year-old economics student, over a hamburger at a McDonald's restaurant.

The U.S. fast food outlet is directly opposite the balcony from which Mr. Havel addressed a crowd of 200,000 people in November 1989, telling them: "One day the historians will call these days extraordinary."

For many Czechs, their country's applications to join the European Union and NATO are far more pressing than reelecting their president.

"It is important for us to join NATO. We need the support of the West," said Martin Podhorsky, a 42-year-old who runs his own poultry business.

"There are still a lot of Communists in this country," he said.

The Czech Republic is among the first in line to join

NATO next year, and along with Hungary and Poland is due to begin talks on joining the European Union in March.

Two years ago the country was the showpiece economy of the region. Tourism in particular exploded exponentially as westerners flocked to see the splendours of Prague.

But a currency crisis last year, surging unemployment and stagnant growth have shattered the illusion of an economic miracle.

"People are aware that it is not going to be easy. Joining the European Union will not solve all our problems," says Mr. Levy.

In 1989 Mr. Havel was certainly a national hero to at least some of his countrymen. But economic and political reality has made matters more complicated.

"Saint Wenceslas was a real national hero," said Mr. Rodi, pointing up to a statue of the 10th century Bohemian leader canonised after being killed by his brother.

"But we need more than saints to help us now."

For many Czechs, their country's applications to join the European Union and NATO are far more pressing than reelecting their president.

"It is important for us to join NATO. We need the support of the West," said Martin Podhorsky, a 42-year-old who runs his own poultry business.

"There are still a lot of Communists in this country," he said.

The Czech Republic is among the first in line to join

U.S. health authorities to regulate human cloning

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. Food and Drug Administration will regulate human cloning and consider unauthorised experiments with the procedure a violation of federal law, The Washington Post said Tuesday.

"Through the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act we do have the authority to regulate human cloning, and we are prepared to assert that authority," Acting FDA Commissioner Michael Friedman said in an interview.

His comments confirmed Secretary of Health and Human Services Donna Shalala's statement to CBS television on Jan. 11 that the U.S. government would not allow a Chicago scientist to go ahead with plans to clone humans.

Mr. Friedman said anybody who wants to carry out human cloning experiments legally must file a formal application with the FDA, which would then undertake a lengthy review.

The FDA will initiate legal action against anyone who does such experiments without filing an application, Mr. Friedman said.

Ever since Chicago physicist Richard Seed said this month he plans to clone human beings, national and international debate on the procedure has raged, with the U.S. government taking steps to head off what it considers a potentially immoral procedure.

President Bill Clinton has slapped a five-year ban on federal money being used in cloning experiments and is urging Congress to pass a bill banning the procedure altogether.

In the first accord of its kind, 19 European countries have signed an agreement banning human cloning.

Mr. Friedman said that after weeks of reviewing the issue, the FDA had determined that the kinds of manipulations involved in human cloning presented "serious health and safety issues" for the foetus and the mother.

Another FDA official said scientists interested in carrying out human cloning experiments would have to file an "investigational new drug application," which drug companies have to submit before testing new medicines on people.

Mr. Seed said he plans to open cloning clinics to help infertile couples in the United States and abroad.

New Bosnian Serb government seeks to stamp authority on region

SARAJEVO (AFP) — The new Bosnian Serb government called for a formal transfer of powers within 48 hours as it sought to stamp its authority across the Serb-run region, officials said.

The new, moderate, prime minister, Milorad Dodik, told a first government meeting late Monday that his hardline predecessor Gojko Kljickovic should transfer his power within 48 hours, while his ministers would have 72 hours to hand over.

The hardliners, loyal to indicted wartime leader Radovan Karadzic, had threatened to oppose the Dodik government which includes representatives of Muslim and Croat voters.

The government Monday froze government bank accounts to prevent any funds being siphoned off before power is fully transferred.

The new government was elected by parliament in the early hours of Sunday. The legislature was elected in November of last year.

Overnight Sunday, NATO troops increased patrols around sensitive areas in the Serb-run Republika Srpska to prevent any threat to the new western-backed government.

It is more supportive of the Bosnian peace process than its hardline predecessor and is likely to get strong support from the west, freeing up Western aid stalled by its predecessor's blocking of progress in implementing the Dayton Peace accords.

Mr. Dodik called on the parliament to hold a session on Jan. 24 in Banja Luka, when new ministers would take an oath of office.

He said the government would prepare to transfer the Bosnian government to Banja Luka, the biggest city in Serb-held territory, from Pale.

Banja Luka is the most cosmopolitan city in Serb hands and has long been waging a power struggle with the hardline clique grouped around Mr. Karadzic in his powerbase, Pale, outside Sarajevo.

Mr. Dodik said his government would also "examine" all the decisions made by former government and parliament since July 3, when Serb President Biljana Plavsic dissolved the previous Serb assembly.

Mr. Dodik Monday told a Sarajevo radio station that he hoped "to establish total control over the territory of Republika Srpska within a month."

Quoted by the independent Bosnian news agency Onasa, he said his government would take "the proper measures" regarding war criminals.

He did not elaborate on the war crimes issue, although the handing over of indicted war criminals is a key item in the 1995 Dayton accords that brought the 1992-95 Bosnian conflict to a halt.

Bosnia envoy Carlos Westendorp told Spanish television Mr. Karadzic would soon be appearing in court.

"I am convinced he will end up before the (U.N. War Crimes) Tribunal in The Hague," either voluntarily or

handed over by the Bosnian Serb authorities, he said.

President Plavsic said the new government would be sworn in this week, "as soon as possible."

In a major boost for Mr. Dodik, the Yugoslav government in Belgrade Monday recognised the new government, apparently ending support for the hardliners to which it has long been loyal.

Yugoslav Prime Minister Radko Kotic sent a message to Mr. Dodik, wishing him and his government "every success" in promoting the "well-being of the Republika Srpska and all its citizens."

The west hopes the new government will be more supportive of measures to move forward the Bosnian peace process, including integrating its financial system.

Mr. Westendorp Tuesday was expected to hand down a decision on a long-delayed common currency for the divided country after the joint presidency Monday again failed to reach a compromise.

Court dismisses Blaskic death threat report

THE HAGUE (R) — The Yugoslav war crimes tribunal Tuesday dismissed a report that Bosnian Croat General Tihomir Blaskic has faced death threats since his surrender to the United Nations court in 1996.

Dutch state radio reported Gen. Blaskic, on trial in the Hague for alleged crimes against humanity, was transferred from house arrest to Scheveningen jail for his own safety last year.

Quoting a senior justice ministry official, the radio said authorities were unable to guarantee Gen. Blaskic's

safety while he was under house arrest at a secret location in the Netherlands.

The report did not specify who was behind the threats or what form they had taken.

"We are absolutely unaware of any threats," tribunal spokesman Christian Chartier told Reuters.

He confirmed Gen. Blaskic's transfer to Scheveningen jail last June but said the move was made out of practical considerations.

"In view of his trial, it was much more practical to be in the tribunal detention unit," Mr. Chartier said.

A justice ministry spokesman said he could not confirm the radio report.

In June, Gen. Blaskic became the highest ranking officer to stand trial before the international criminal tribunal for former Yugoslavia.

The first suspect to turn himself in, he managed to negotiate special detention conditions with the authorities.

Gen. Blaskic denies charges he directed a brutal ethnic cleansing campaign against Muslims in central Bosnia from 1992 to 1994.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation. Established 1975.

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
MAHMOUD AL KAYEDDirector General:
MOHAMMAD AMADEditor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEHEditorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation.University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
Telephones: 684311, 699634, 667171, 603585

Facsimile: 696183

E-mail: jntimes@gn.com.jo

Web Sites: http://accessme.com/JordanTimes/

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays. Subscription and advertising rates are available from the Jordan Times advertising department.

Lesson in budget debate

THE DRAFT 1998 state budget was adopted by the Lower House of Parliament Monday with a comfortable majority. Fifty-nine of the 74 deputies present voted for while 14 opposed it. The numbers contrast not only with the results of the vote of confidence in Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali's Cabinet last month but also with the loud opposition to the economic and fiscal policies of the government that was actually voiced by so many deputies during the marathon parliamentary debate on the proposed budget. After so many deputies expressed serious doubts about the health of the national economy and expressed profound concern about the levels of poverty and unemployment in the country, the people's representatives decided to be realistic and gave their blessing to the budget draft law when it came to a vote.

While conceding that "the economy situation does not meet our expectations at the moment and that there are indeed problems of unemployment and poverty," the prime minister nevertheless argued that these shortcomings are not as serious as the deputies portrayed them to be in their speeches, which is one factor that explains the discrepancy between the discourse of the parliamentarians and their vote. Another reason for this could be found in the fact that deputies had discovered in the debate that their initial estimations of the economic factors at play were made on different grounds and according to different statistics from the government's. Dr. Majali sought to explain the divergence, for instance in the unemployment domain by referring to the some half a million foreign workers employed in the Kingdom because Jordanians do not accept to perform their kind of work.

Even if we accept the prime minister's depiction of the unemployment situation, the fact remains that the rate of unemployment remains relatively high for this country. Worse still, the wages of many Jordanians are so low and much below the minimum wage level necessary to lead an acceptable standard of living. Moreover, the issue of whether the Kingdom suffers from a recession cannot be determined purely by macro-economy figures. The country may be doing well or reasonably well on the macro level but we are certainly not doing well on the micro level judging by the fact that so many Jordanians still live below the poverty line and so many others have very low incomes.

The debate, in any case, was an eye-opener and as such useful. True, there are those economists, in the government and elsewhere, who thought the deputies generally did not get their act together in so far as presenting and discussing economic facts and figures. But what is important in the final analysis is that the country had a chance to discuss and listen in public to the various views concerning the Kingdom's economy and our financial standing.

Democracy has a lot to do with accumulating learning experiences and raising public awareness about the issues facing us. In that respect at least, we can boast some achievement.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Ra'i's Samir Qatani criticised Jordanian writers for maintaining a hostile campaign against Iraq for executing four Jordanians involved in smuggling operations. According to Qatani, Iraq did not execute these people because they were Jordanians but because they committed crimes against the Iraqi people, depriving them of essential parts for their vehicles which they are not allowed to import because of the sanctions. It is shameful to see Jordanian writers instigating the Jordanian public against Iraq in a campaign that only can benefit the enemies of the Arab nation, added the writer. The Iraqis appreciate the Jordanian people's support, said Qatani. But, he said the Iraqis are pained to see Jordan giving safe haven to members of the Iraqi opposition and allowing Iraqi dissidents to launch hostile campaigns from Jordanian territory on the Iraqi regime. The Jordanians, said the writer, should be grateful to Iraq for allowing the Kingdom to purchase Iraqi oil at concessional terms and should express thanks to Baghdad for obtaining much of the oil free of charge. The writer said criminal activity such as the smuggling of vital equipment out of Iraq should not be condoned but rather condemned by everyone.

Al Ra'i's Tareq Masarweh lauded the European Union's stand vis-a-vis the Middle East question. In their recent declaration about the Middle East the Europeans expressed their dissatisfaction with their dialogue with Israel over the Middle East peace and demanded that they be given a more meaningful role in the peace-making process, according to the writer. He said the Europeans believe that their role as financiers of projects in the self-rule areas of Palestine has not yielded any positive results and that most of the projects have not succeeded due to Israel's inhuman practices and measures imposed on the Palestinians. Furthermore Europeans have discovered that although the rate of unemployment during the intifada stood at 20 per cent in the Palestinian lands, it has now jumped to 40 per cent despite the European aid, noted the writer. He said while the Europeans were kept in the dark about the peace process the U.S. proved its impotence in giving any momentum to the talks, leaving the Israelis a free hand. The writer said the Arab countries should now be prepared for the coming stage should the Clinton-Netanyahu meeting in Washington prove a failure.

Washington Watch

Resorting to 'Jewish McCarthyism'

By Dr. James Zogby

IN A TOUGH-WORDED editorial entitled "The New McCarthyism," The New York Times' Anthony Lewis decried the decision of Washington's Smithsonian Institution to bend to pressure from right-wing Jewish groups and change their planned lecture series on Israel's 50-year anniversary.

The Smithsonian's programme was to have been called "Israel at 50: Yesterday's Dreams, Today's Realities" and was to have been cosponsored by the New Israel Fund (NIF), which had initiated the idea for the lecture series. The NIF is a liberal Jewish group that promotes democracy within Israel, supports several projects that serve Israel's Palestinian Arab community and refuses to engage in any activity in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

What raised the ire of the far right was the fact that the NIF-Smithsonian programme was to have attempted, from a "post-Zionist" perspective, to present a more or less balanced view of Israel's current reality. The programme was to feature speakers critical of Israeli policy, such as journalist Thomas Friedman of The New York Times, Israeli professor Ehud Sprinzak, who has been critical of Israel's right-wing, and Azmi Bishara, an Arab member of Israel's Knesset. The programme was to have provided discussions of the impact of the occupation of Arab land on Israeli society, Israel's treatment of its Arab minority and the growing rift between the Orthodox Jews and other elements of Israeli society.

The response from pro-Likud Jewish groups was predictable. They condemned the Smithsonian for presenting a "one-sided negative view" of Israel. They enlisted right-wing newspapers like the Washington Times and the New York Post to help make their case. Furthermore, they received support from right-wing members of Congress like Republican Mike Forbes of New York who wrote to the Smithsonian threatening hearings on the matter. Since the Smithsonian relies on congressional funding, this amounted to a significant threat.

In the end, the Smithsonian bowed to the pressure campaign, withdrew their co-sponsorship with the NIF and decided to redesign the entire programme.

It was the NIF that first used the term "Jewish

McCarthyism" to describe the pressure campaign against their programme. It was an appropriate term. McCarthyism, of course, refers to the infamous campaign begun by the Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy who terrorised Washington in the 1950s. In his overzealous pursuit of communists, the senator launched a wave of intimidation that caused thousands of innocent people to be blacklisted and persecuted.

This same tactic of smearing one's opponents and seeking to isolate and intimidate those who hold differing points of view has long been a tool used by some pro-Israel groups. They have used it to repress debate within the Jewish community, and they have used it with varying degrees of success against Arab Americans as well.

In 1985, following the murder of Arab American activist Alex Odeh, I wrote to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission complaining of this tactic used by some U.S. Jewish groups against Arab Americans.

"These acts of violence and threats of violence against Arab American organisations are but part of a larger picture of discrimination, harassment and intimidation. We can document numerous instances of active political discrimination against Arab Americans, 'blacklisting' of Arab American political activists and spokespersons, and efforts to 'bait' or 'taint' Arab American leaders and organisations as 'terrorists' or 'terrorist supporters'."

"All of these actions and practices create a climate in which Arab Americans become fearful of speaking freely and participating in legitimate political activity. Further, these practices serve to embolden the political opponents of Arab Americans to the point where, as we have seen, some have escalated their opposition to include acts of violence against Arab Americans and their organisations."

I described this effort as a political agenda that had as its focus "nothing less than the total silencing of the Arab American community, its organisations and its leaders."

Negative campaigns of this sort continued unabated through the early 1990s. Following the September 13, 1993, signing on the White House lawn, these attacks subsided and, for a while, only fringe groups from the far right continued to smear Arab American organisations and their leaders.

tions and their leaders.

Now it appears the anti-Arab campaign may be starting over again.

In a recent syndicated column, the former Executive Director of AIPAC (the pro-Israel lobby) Neal Sher wrote the article "Why Zogby's actions don't match his rhetoric."

While the article pretends to be a criticism of my views (selectively excerpted from this weekly column), Sher's real target is the White House which he condemns for having included me as a participant in a recent conference on Hate Crimes. Sher's point is crystal clear — the White House should not invite Arab American leaders like me who criticise Israeli policy.

This is the old tactic of attempting to smear and isolate Arab Americans, thereby denying us full rights as citizens.

Sher's article was followed by another longer piece entitled "Israel's Arab Detractors — Back Again," written by AIPAC's Director of Policy Analysis Michael Lewis.

Lewis began his article "James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute (AAI), and over the years, one of Israel's foremost detractors in the United States..."

Included in the nine-page piece is the author's highly biased description of 15 Arab American and Middle East-related organisations, to which Lewis refuses to grant any legitimacy. They are, for him, merely anti-Israel vehicles. They should not be recognised or accepted, he argues, until they cease their criticism of the Jewish state's policies.

The old game is back. It is McCarthyism to be sure, and its targets are both Arab American institutions and some Jewish organisations that criticise Israeli policy.

The good news is that this effort, though burdensome, will not succeed. The Sher article, for example, was criticised in writing by several Jewish leaders and one prominent State Department official. The debate over Israeli policy is too crucial and too vigorous to shut down because of threats and intimidation. Moreover, the divisions in the Jewish community are too deeply rooted to be silenced. What is also true is that Arab Americans have succeeded in establishing their presence in U.S. politics, and while still vulnerable to attack, will not be isolated and silenced as they were in the past.

THE ASIAN CRISIS

Part I: Does meltdown spread?

In this the first of a three-part special series, Gwynne Dyer examines the economic, social, and political implications of the crisis that began in Asia and now threatens to involve the entire world.

SEOUL — "The experience of being disastrously wrong is salutary," J.K. Galbraith once remarked. "No economist should be denied it, and not many are." Not now, anyway. Six months into the slow unravelling of the Asian economic miracle, nobody knows what comes next.

"Inflation will flare up, unemployment rise, and numerous companies collapse," warned South Korea's president-elect Kim Dae-jung on New Year's Day, and all that is happening already — not just in South Korea, but in Indonesia, Thailand and the other ex-tigers. But what about other 'emerging markets' like Russia, India and Brazil? Could the contagion even affect mature industrial economies like the United States, Germany, and Japan?

So far, the dykes are holding. The other emerging markets have paid a high price: Russian interest rates doubled in November to stop foreigners from dumping government bonds and sinking the rouble, and Brazil had to impose an austerity plan to defend the real's peg to the dollar. But despite a wild ride in the stock markets in October, the other two 'time zones' of the industrial world, Western Europe and North America, have taken no major hits.

Only it's not over yet. There is more bad news to come, even in countries where the currency has already fallen by half. Take Malaysia.

Compared to places like Indonesia or South Korea, Malaysia is a model of financial prudence. The banking system is better regulated, and unsecured loans and monopolies were handed out to the party faithful rather less generously: no more than a dozen men in the country have made over \$100 million from their connections. But as a local financial analyst said in Kuala Lumpur in November (off the record, of course): "Nobody knows how much money is under water around here."

The Malaysian stock market is down by 60 per cent since August, and a huge proportion of the cash that evaporated was borrowed money. With the end-of-year accounting period now upon us, the banks cannot obey Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's request to 'wait' on these debts much longer. So we will shortly find out whether Malaysia's hidden problem is big but manageable, or whether it is a \$10-15 billion killer that will force brokerage houses and banks to close, and trigger a new fall in the ringgit.

There are land-mines like this scat-

tered throughout the region: the best guess is that only about two-thirds of the bad news has come out yet. Worse yet, the remaining bad news is heavily concentrated in Asia's two biggest economies: Japan and China.

Japan has the world's second-largest economy, but a financial system not vastly superior to South Korea's. In a way, it is just a super-Korea: during the later 1980s the big Japanese banks and industrial conglomerates, with the encouragement of the state, succumbed to the same delusion that unlimited investment would produce unlimited returns, almost regardless of where you put it.

Japan built new industrial capacity in the late 80s equal to three times the total capacity of France, and of course there was no market for it. The 'bubble' burst in 1989, and since then Japan has had the lowest economic growth rate of any G-7 country. Japanese banks were already sitting on one mountain of bad debt: now the crisis in the 'tigers' has given them another.

On Jan. 13, the finance ministry disclosed that Japanese banks have three times the total of bad or doubtful loans that they had previously admitted: \$86.3 billion in "irrecoverable" or "high risk" loans, and another \$481 billion in "questionable" lending.

With good luck and good management, Japan may squeak through once again. But bad luck and/or bad management could produce a cascade of Japanese bank failures later this year. That would certainly have a global impact.

So would major political upheavals in China, which are very likely if the government goes ahead with the plans for mass privatisation that were announced at the 15th Party Congress in September. If Beijing doesn't go ahead with the reforms, on the other hand, the economy will start to buckle under the weight of supporting so many loss-making state enterprises. Heads you lose, tails you lose.

At the least, global economic confidence will probably have to withstand two more major shocks this year: another big downward lurch in the Japanese stock market, and a devaluation of the Chinese currency. (And if the yuan falls, Hong Kong cannot avoid devaluing at the same time.) This promises to be exciting stuff, for these are far bigger economies than the ones whose troubles are currently spreading dismay around the planet.

Japan and China-plus-Hong-Kong together account for one-sixth of world trade. If they come seriously unstuck, then the entire world is heading into a major recession. (The editor says not to use the d-word.) But even if full-scale panic does not spread beyond Asia, the net impact of the Asian crisis on the rest of the world will not be small.

Barring full-scale global market meltdown, the non-Asian countries will probably carry on much as usual economically for the next six months. Then, as the full impact of Asia's difficulties feeds into the global economy, they will start to come seriously off the curve in the second half, with falling growth and rising unemployment all around.

That will be unpleasant for everyone, but nothing like the level of pain that eastern Asia will be experiencing by then. There have been a million jobs lost in greater Jakarta (pop. 16 million) in the past six months, as 16 banks were shut down and construction cranes halted throughout the metropolitan area. At least a million more jobs will disappear in the capital alone this year, and between five and 10 million more in the rest of the archipelago.

South Korea saw 15,000 business failures last year, but that's not a patch on the likely casualty toll for 1998. Much has been made of the 'market for the formerly rich' in east-central Bangkok, where Thais with cash-flow problems can sell off the second BMW to cover the servants' salaries, but the real pain is among the millions of 'formerly just getting by' who now literally have to eat less. If this is a rite of passage, it's one hell of a tough one.

It probably is a rite of passage, in both the psychological and the structural senses. The boundless optimism and naive arrogance of the 'miracle' years were bound to end in tears. The cronyism, cheap credit and lax regulation that fuelled the Asian investment mania of the past five years was not a system that could carry these countries into the promised land of full industrial status.

Now, in a region awash with goods for which there is no market, buildings with no tenants, and banks without money, they must build new financial structures that will meet the standards of their new master, the IMF. That means changing their whole 'Asian way' approach to doing business.

"The IMF is asking them to change not just their economy, but their culture," said David Roche, formerly with Morgan Stanley and now president of London-based Independent Strategy. But with bail-outs on the order of \$17 billion (Thailand), \$23 billion (Indonesia), and at least \$57 billion for South Korea, the IMF — or rather its owners, the industrialised countries — now calls the tune, and the locals must dance to it even if they hate it.

Indeed, plenty of people in the region (Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad and the militant South Korean trade unions, to name but two) suspect that the whole crisis was engineered by the West to sabotage rising Asian competition, and to facilitate foreign take-overs of local firms.

The foreign take-overs are certainly happening: Thailand's 91 finance companies and 15 banks will be down to around 10 of each by late 1998, estimates Neil Saker, head of regional economic research at SocGen-Crosby Securities in Singapore — and "outside the top four banks, they will all be foreign-controlled." But Asian competitiveness in export markets is actually sharpening as a result of the steep devaluation of most of the region's currencies.

Why, then, have the advanced economies come up with so much money to bail out the former Asian 'tigers'? Pure self-interest. These Asian economies are big enough, and linked closely enough to the rich countries by trade and investment, that their misfortunes can drag the rich down too. So they must be rescued — whereas really poor countries don't count at all, and can be left to starve.

The unfolding of the first big 'post-global' economic crisis highlights two problems that were covered up or wished away in the early enthusiasm for globalisation. The first is that it's a pretty selective globalisation.

It took the IMF just two weeks to drum up \$57 billion in emergency loans for 45 million South Koreans (whose average wages are about equal to those in Britain). It has taken the IMF most of this decade to get a tentative agreement on less than \$10 billion worth of debt relief for hundreds of millions of very poor people in the 'Highly Indebted Poor Countries' places like Mozambique, where debt service amounts to double the combined health and education budgets. "The market" worries about stability, but it doesn't give a damn about the sufferings of mere people.

The second, seriously frightening revelation is that the global economy, having evolved without a plan, is a tightly inter-linked but almost completely unregulated system. Disturbances propagate through the system in ways both rapid and unforeseen: who would have guessed that the problems of some Indonesian pseudo-banks owned by relatives and cronies of President Suharto could shake Western stock exchanges? It turns out that the global market, like other markets, does not automatically seek stability, and is perfectly capable of spinning out of control. Over 70 years ago, just before the last Great Depression, John Maynard Keynes wrote: "I think that Capitalism, wisely managed, can be made more efficient for attaining economic ends than any alternative system yet in sight, but that in itself it is in many ways extremely objectionable."

The free market has triumphed worldwide, but now comes the task of figuring out how to survive the vicissitudes. The global economy awaits its Keynes.



Mandatory belonging: doomed by natural causes

IN THIS day and age, it is ridiculous that people have to join a union before they're allowed a living. It is even more ridiculous that only one union per profession is allowed to exist. What if I don't want Saif Al Sharif or his buddies safeguarding my future or making a speech on my behalf? If I had been an engineer, what if I did not want a hero, dead or alive, for my president?

No problem! It is only a matter of time before commune-style mandatory belonging is abolished in the Kingdom. Hopefully, just like all other public sector enterprises, syndicates would be privatised and allowed to compete. At one point in our lifetime, we may even witness attractive newspaper advertising such as: Normalise by Joining Us! We put a fountain pen in your hand — The General Union For High Life Journalists. Next to it would be another attention grabber: Join Us by Normalising! We put bread and peanut butter on your wife's lap — The Association for Deserving Journalists. At that time, one could even choose not to join either and still write for a foreign publication. Salamah Ne'matt included.

Even though I believe that forcing professionals into a uniform entity is sort of backwards after the fall of the Soviet Union, I nevertheless call upon law changers not to scrap the concept altogether, but instead exercise selective Stalinism, or American style double-standard hegemony, to difference.

In 1572, when Elizabeth was calling all the shots in England, unlicensed beggars 14 or older were flogged on the first offence and executed on the second. I suggest a mandatory Beggars Union instead of licensing. The concept is not as ancient as one might think, it was the norm in Europe only a few hundred years back!

Once beggars would have to join a union to make a living, they are destined to win a president who would take it upon himself to negotiate on their behalf and make speeches. Good grounds for congenital heart disease.

In addition, if it is true that beggars are voluntary criminals, they would most likely break the law by soliciting without a union card. Good cause for punishment. Beggars, who think into the future and choose to wave a union card in the face of authority, would have to go on strike every other month in protest of arbitrary regulatory measures. Because they are not proletarian in any way or form (unlike journalists, engineers and government officials) their income would collapse dramatically, and the whole profession would become unworthy of having to attend rallies, Ramadan iftar banquets and fighting for their right to walk the streets freely. Good cause for extinction.

feature
Petra
cultural

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

By Kumi G. Khouri

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

...the second of the p...
...discovered in 198...
...19th Century Byz...

Officials, economists prefer postponing issuance of Jordan bonds until markets stabilise

By Issam Qadamani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Officials here ruled out the possibility that the government might issue \$100 million worth of sovereign bonds soon, while banking sources anticipated that the bonds will be issued in April.

A senior official, however, said it would be useful to postpone the issuance of these bonds, adding that there will be no harm in waiting until prices in international markets stabilise.

The sources added that Jordan is not in a pressing situation to sell these bonds now. Walid Irsheid, issuance director and manager of the French Societe Generale office in Amman, expressed support for the idea of postponing the issuance of these

bonds, saying that many countries have previously postponed similar issuance.

However, he stressed that the issuance has not been cancelled but will take place when international trading circumstances improve.

LIBOR interest rates have increased significantly in London and that puts additional interest rates, ranging between two and three per cent, on borrowers.

As a preferred client for the London banks, where the bonds will be floated, Jordan could have secured prices which are higher by 1-1.5 per cent above the LIBOR prices.

Commenting on the issuance of the bonds, a prominent Jordanian economist said that countries with huge economies are resort-

ing to such issuance while many countries, like Jordan, has postponed the issuance of such bonds because they will incur high costs if they do it at a time when prices are not stable.

The economist said it will take a long time before the interest rates go back to normal.

Banking sources anticipate that situations in international markets will stabilise within the next two or three months and suggested that bonds be floated in April.

They anticipate that Jordan will gain a profit of 30 per cent if the bonds are floated in ordinary circumstances when prices stabilise in international markets.

Non-resident workers must pay 10 per cent income tax

By Iyad Waqfi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Income Tax Department General Manager Mansour Haddadin Tuesday said that the prime minister's communique to cut 10 per cent of the salaries of non-resident workers

achieves tax justice.

"The 10 per cent is not a final percentage as another 1.5 per cent fine will be imposed on the non-residents' monthly income if they fail to pay on time," Mr. Haddadin said.

Mr. Haddadin explained: "Jordanians are considered residents

if they reside in the Kingdom for 120 days during a year or, even if they are recruited at government institutions."

He added that as for non-Jordanians, they are considered residents if they reside in the Kingdom for 183 days during a year.

Egypt pursues gas export deals

CAIRO (R) — Oil Minister Hamdi El-Banbi says Egypt would like to export gas to its neighbours, but will focus on its burgeoning home market if the price is not right.

He told Reuters in an interview this week that separate schemes to export gas to Turkey, Jordan, the Gaza Strip and Libya were under discussion, but pricing had not been agreed.

"We require a certain price," he said, without disclosing Egypt's pricing formula. "If we do not get it, we will not export because we do not need to export."

Mr. Banbi said domestic gas demand was expected to grow 50 per cent in the next two or three years.

Egypt, which now produces about 1.6 billion cubic feet (45.7 million cubic metres) a day of gas, was planning gradually to convert power, cement, steel, fertilizer and other industries to gas, he said.

The use of gas by domestic consumers and in the form of compressed natural gas for vehicles would also grow.

A gas pipeline would reach the city of Beni Suef, 130 km

south of Cairo, by March. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) had been signed with British Gas and Italy's Edison to extend it to Assiut, 90 kilometres further south.

Expanding domestic use of gas had important environmental benefits and was easier than exporting it, Mr. Banbi said.

Egypt's gas reserves, now about 32 trillion cubic feet, were expected to grow as deep-water drilling in the Mediterranean gets under way over the next two years, he said. Oil reserves stood at about three billion barrels and had been declining.

Mr. Banbi said the first gas export scheme to materialise might be one to supply a power plant to be built in Gaza by Agip Spa, an affiliate of Italy's Eni Spa, for the Palestinian Authority.

"It requires a small amount of gas which we can spare, maybe something in the region of 150 million cubic feet a day, which we can accommodate very quickly," the minister said.

The state-owned Egyptian General Petroleum Corp. signed an MoU in 1996 to

sell Turkey's state-owned Botas about 10 billion cubic metres of liquefied natural gas (LNG) a year.

Amoco Corp. of the United States and SNAM, the LNG arm of ENI, each have a 45 per cent stake in the project.

Mr. Banbi said a committee had completed work on technical aspects and financial aspects were "about to be finalised."

He said developing Mediterranean gas fields for the project would cost about \$2 billion, with an LNG plant and pipeline expected to cost another \$2 billion. Foreign firms would finance all the upstream development and about 90 per cent of the rest.

"We have the (LNG plant) site ready and we are ready to go as soon as the final terms are agreed," Mr. Banbi declared.

Another scheme would deliver 200 to 250 million cubic feet of gas a day to Jordan for a pipeline project involving Amoco, Belgium's Tractebel and private Jordanian companies.

Banbi said Egypt was also studying the possibility of exporting gas to Libya for planned power and desalination plants in Western areas. In return, Egypt would import Libyan crude oil for refining in the northern city of Alexandria.

The minister said the idea would be to export 300 to 350 million cubic feet a day to Libya and import 100,000 to 150,000 bpd of Libyan oil, but modalities had not been agreed.

A barter arrangement was a possible alternative to conventional sales. Another was a swap whereby Libya would export to Italy the same amount of gas it received from Egypt.

Banbi said Egypt was ready to sign 12 exploration agreements for a total of \$221 million of investment after getting 29 bids in September. The deals call for 65 exploration wells and cover a total 50,000-square-kilometre (18,750 square miles).

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 21, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) You could be impatient today. Someone else insists on checking out all aspects before proceeding. You're also getting a lot of attention, so this is good. Go ahead and urge people to make up their minds, but don't be dismayed if it takes them a while. It might be the end of the week before you get a decision on your proposal.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You want one thing and an older person wants another this morning. A friend is willing to take your side, but it won't be an easy partnership. Your ally has a hidden agenda. Better find out what it is ahead of time. You might decide to accept the boss's difficult, challenging offer after all.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) You have to do some things you don't like, or even approve of. Don't do anything illegal or immoral. If you'd just rather do something else, that doesn't count as an excuse. What's bothering you the most could be a co-worker who rubs you the wrong way. You can put up with that a while longer. Keep your overall objective in mind.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) You're going into an area you're not too sure about. That's OK. You have important people on your side, and you've been studying and getting organized lately. Present your ideas to a person who's a little intimidating. He or she won't be able to help but see your logic. Don't wait. The chances of success are best this morning.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You may feel like you're marching in place. Nothing seems to be getting done. Actually, you're probably making a lot of minor decisions as you work up to big one. Be patient. Listen to everybody's ideas. By the time you get this worked out, you'll have something you can all live with for years. That's the objective, anyway.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You always like to perform flawlessly, but somebody's just thrown you a curve. This person wants things done differently than the way you're used to. This doesn't have to create a breakdown, but it could mean a little extra effort on your part. That's OK. You have the time to figure it out and practice.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) There's some financial situation to be dealt with. There also seems to be pressure on a partner of yours. To help, you could offer to pay for more of the household expenses. That would not only ease the tension, but make you stronger and more self-assured. And it would be a nice thing to do.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) There could be a conflict first thing this morning. Somebody at home doesn't want to do what you told him or her to. That could be one of your children, your spouse or a relative. It could even be a dog or cat. At any rate, that person will be feistier than usual. Don't worry. You will eventually triumph.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) You've been learning new information lately. The problem is that you don't quite have it down yet. You still have to do things the old way until the new way goes into effect. If that sounds confusing, you're right. But you'll probably see this played out in your life today. Just do the best you can.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Several of your friends will be there to help today if you need them. It looks like you have a big project going, and that's great. Don't try to do it all by yourself, however. Accept the help of your friends and your chances of success improve considerably.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) There is a definite attraction between Aquarius and Scorpio. It often shows up in romantic relationships. If you're in one now, watch out. That person is going to want to tell you what to do. And if you're really wise, you'll go along with the programme.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) One of your biggest problems is that you tend to get frozen up. Sometimes you just can't think what to do. That's less likely to happen today. And if you've got a calm Scorpio in your life, this would be a good day to ask for money. An idea he or she has could help you gain fame and fortune. Time to collaborate.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

A Special Gift from FastLink
this Eid. A Sadiq mobile line from as little as



The New FastLink Sadiq* Service

Motorola d160 at only JD 129

Offer valid until end of Ramadan.

*Sadiq service is available for phase 2 mobile phones only

For further information call us at Amman-963750. Wihdat (Taybat Village) 770770
Aqaba-03-202257, Irbid-02-251631, 111 on your mobile
www.jmcs-fastlink.com



CAREER OPPORTUNITY

A leading travel agency in Amman is seeking to employ (female / male) staff:

Inbound Travel & Tourism
Self motivated
Hard working
Dedicated
Willing to work long hours
Good command of English
Word & Excel knowledge
Experience is a plus
Other languages are a plus

Ticketing & Reservation
Self motivated
Hard Working
Good command of English
Min. 3 yrs experience
Presentable
Outgoing personality
Dedicated

Serious candidates kindly send C.V. & recent photo to:

Career Opportunity

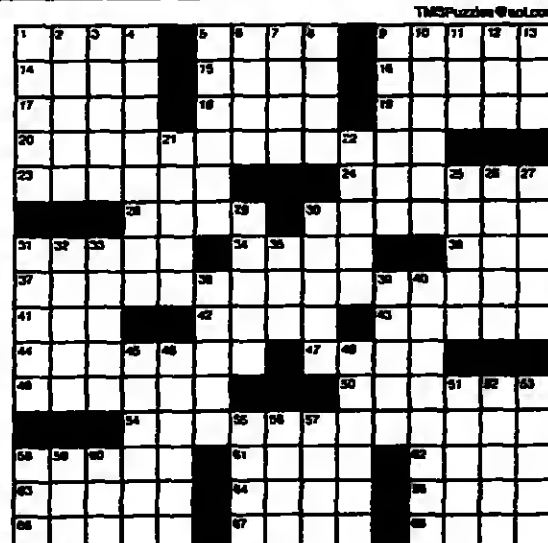
pls. specify (Inbound Or Ticketing)

P.O. Box 640

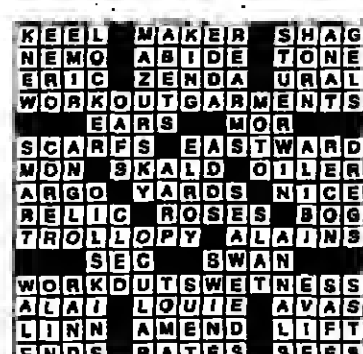
Amman 11118

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

- ACROSS**
1 Disfigurement
5 French pronoun
9 Venetian-blind strips
14 One of Hamlet's choices
15 Letters
16 MTV play
17 Woe is me!
18 Partiality
19 Called it off
20 Many someone much younger
23 Captured
24 Student's pieces
28 Ingrid in "Cissabell"
30 Italian fresco painter
31 Arcing tee shot
34 Cartoon deputy
36 CSA boy
37 Potential codefendants
41 Actress Ullmann
42 Low fat
43 Norse gods
44 Angels' home
47 Brief time spans briefly
48 Mortise
49 Gracefully slender
50 Pyramus' lover
54 Get raves for a bit part
58 Verbalize
61 Meat out
62 Hirsch sitcom
63 Well worker
64 Writer Morrison
65 Moran of "Happy Days"
66 Requirements
67 Energy cartel, in brief
68 Bell tone



- DOWN**
1 Headlines
2 Intestine segment
3 Addis ... Eth.
4 Limit
5 Flies into a surrounding mass
6 Non-cleric
7 Whopper peddler
8 "Born Free" lioness
9 Gracefully slender
10 Rooster in order
11 Say more
12 Golf gadget
13 Grassy ground
21 Ms. Gurley
22 Condescend to give
25 Day in the movies
26 Varnish ingredient
29 Relevant: Latin
30 Two of a kind
31 Wet impact
32 Cleo, the singer
33 Ernie the auto racer
35 Comparison phrase
38 Beethoven's "Fur ..."
39 Hidden supply

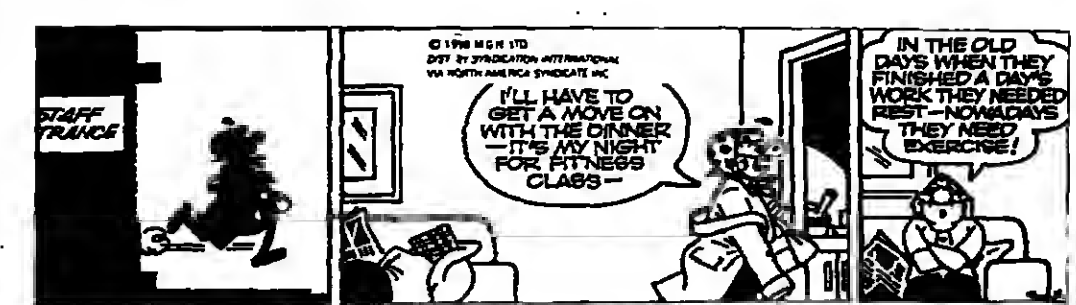


- KEEL MAKER SHAG NEMO ABIDE TONE ERIC ZENDA URAL WORKOUT GARMENTS EARS MOR SCARFS EASTWARD MON SKALD OILER ARGO YARDS NICE RELIC ROSES BOG TROLLOPY ALA LINS WORKOUTSWETNESS ALAI LOUITE AVIAIS LINN AMEND LIFT ENDS RATES SEES**
40 Put up a fight
45 Threw the party
46 Penetrates
48 Member of a cultural minority
51 Puppeteer Lewis
52 Attack from all sides
53 J.R. or Jack
55 Choir voice
56 Programizing repetition
57 Prong
58 "Dombey and ..."
59 Deadlock
60 Puto preference

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



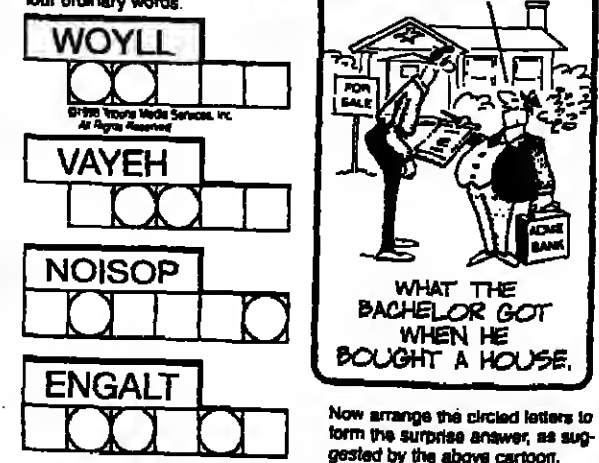
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"Mom, I'm going over my childhood medical records. Did you ever have me vaccinated for cooties?"

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles. One letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.



Print answer here: A

Yesterday's Jumble: MOUND CARGO FLEECE OFFSET

Answer: With the diamond dealer gave the customer - A GEM OF AN OFFER

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Bataineh: 86 per cent of JIC investments are in the potash, phosphate and cement firms

THE JORDAN Investment Corporation (JIC), the government's arm that handles state investments, has equity worth JD150 million at book value in about 55 companies. JIC Director General Mohammad Bataineh has said. The government investments in the potash, phosphate and cement companies represent 86 per cent of the total amount mentioned while the remaining 14 per cent is spread over the other 52 firms.

Mr. Bataineh said the government did not participate in the selling of potash shares on the international market because it found that the timing was not appropriate in light of the collapses in financial markets, especially in South East Asia. "We support the drive but we hoped there was patience in the sale process," he said. "It seems the company was already determined in carrying out the decision which was in its interest and based on its need for liquidity to complete expansion projects."

MoGA preparing 80 dunums in Sahab to be used for exporting vegetables, fruits

THE MUNICIPALITY of Greater Amman (MoGA) is currently working on providing the necessary infrastructure services to an 80-dunum area in Sahab where a market to export fruits and vegetables will be set up. Investors and traders will be leased plots of land to establish the necessary workshops based on encouraging investment terms. Municipality sources said MoGA has provided facilities and incentives to attract produce export workshops, scattered in many areas of Amman, to the new site which is close to the Central Vegetable Market in Sahab. According to the sources, the rent per dunum will be JD150 and for a period of 15 years. The investor cannot rent more than four dunums, the sources added (Al Arah Al Yawm).

Mideast journalists to get 'a taste of quality reporting' through Jemstone project in '98

By Ghalia Alul Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Journalists from 12 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean basin are poised to get a taste of quality reporting in 1998 through the biggest media network in the area that was recently relunched by the European Union (EU).

The Amman-based Jemstone project, created through the union's Med Media programme, has prepared a list of ambitious activities for this year, ranging from specialist reporting workshops to training media managers.

It wants to support and encourage independent, high quality reporting in all branches of the region's media, according to project director, Tudor Lomas.

Through its many activities, Jemstone seeks to increase contacts and understanding between journalists and media professionals in Europe and the 12 countries of North Africa and the Eastern Mediterranean.

This month, 14 journalists will take part in Jemstone's Internet workshop aimed at providing reporters with the opportunity to share "practical self-taught experience" on cyberspace. Mr. Lomas told the Jordan Times Monday.

"Quite a few people in the

media use and understand the potential of the Internet. Through this workshop, journalists will learn from their colleagues' experiences," he said.

The workshop is organised in cooperation with OneWorld Online and IDEAL Training Centre (IDEAL Group).

In February, Jemstone will bring together about 25 seasoned Eastern Mediterranean business and economic journalists in Amman to tackle obstacles impeding business, economic and financial reporting in the region. The workshop will also try to find ways to improve the quality of economic and business reporting.

The week-long workshop, run jointly with the World Bank's Economic Development Institute (EDI), will also discuss local and regional implications of international economic integration, said Mr. Lomas.

He said that the workshop will include a visit to some projects in Amman, such as the joint Jordanian-Israeli airport. Journalists will also meet with some officials in Amman to discuss future projects including plans for a multi-million-dollar free zone in Amman and other tourism projects.

Jemstone has been frequently criticised for focusing much of its activities on

economic journalists, said Mr. Lomas.

"But this focus is no accident. Economic journalism is worthless unless it is accurate, objective, well researched and clearly written. Nobody is going to make decisions based on wishful thinking or popular half-truths. What is needed are hard, carefully-checked, fully understood facts from reliable sources."

Senior journalists will try to produce an ambitious style guide book for Arabic speaking publications through another Jemstone workshop scheduled to be held in Damascus by the end of February, according to Mr. Lomas.

He said that another specialised workshop for environment reporters is scheduled to be held on South Sinai in March in cooperation with the Egyptian National Parks.

To guarantee a successful future for all kinds of media, Mr. Lomas said, Jemstone planned an "Audience/Readership Research" workshop in March with the aim of helping journalists get a firm idea of the actual needs of the public.

This workshop will "tie organisations to their public...to try and provide people with what they want from the media," Mr. Lomas said.

Prompted by the need to

ensure that journalists get proper training, Jemstone scheduled a training programme for heads of departments, who would later help train other journalists. Mr. Lomas said.

The three-week workshop will bring together about 15 training managers in Hilversum, the Netherlands, in April, to be followed up by a workshop in Cairo in June.

To create professional educational reporters in the Eastern Mediterranean region, Jemstone planned a "Specialist Education Reporters" workshop in partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Turkey in May. "Education reporters don't exist. Good things are happening around in many countries and this experience should be passed on as the quality of education determines the future for many individuals," Mr. Lomas stressed, adding that in the future, exchange visits will be funded to give education reporters the opportunity to visit and learn from other countries' experiences.

Skilled news photographers will participate in a June workshop in Gaza, and about 15 specialist media reporters are scheduled to take part in another workshop in Beirut in July, according to Mr. Lomas.

In August, Jemstone will organise a three-week workshop on journalism skills gathering about 30 "committed young journalists from radio and television to develop their journalistic skills and abilities, and explore new ideas."

Io September, about 15 senior newspaper managers will take part in a workshop in Brussels to evaluate the network's activities, restate their needs and help reshape Jemstone's future priorities, plans and structure, said Mr. Lomas.

He added that a round table conference that will look at the future of journalists will be held in Amman or Cairo in October.

"Unless journalism is defended, it will disappear and will be replaced with propaganda and commercial pressure," said Mr. Lomas. Jemstone links over 50 of the main newspapers, news agencies and broadcasters in these countries as well as over 350 of the region's best journalists.

"We are actively looking for more partners to share the cost with us," said Mr. Lomas. The EU's Med Media programme, launched in late 1993, was suspended in December 1995. But Jemstone and its sister programme, Remfoc in the Maghreb, continued to operate with special EU funding.

Shuja is a unique and modern yacht, built in Wisconsin, USA, to the hotel specifications. Shuja, which translated from Arabic means "brave," is a 100 feet long and 20 feet wide yacht, that has been purpose built to provide a dining and entertaining experience for up to 150 people.

SHUJA — FORTE GRAND ABU DHABI'S NEW CRUISING YACHT

THE FORTE Grand Abu Dhabi's new cruising yacht — Shuja — will be launched at the beginning of February 1998.

Shuja is a unique and modern yacht, built in Wisconsin, USA, to the hotel specifications. Shuja, which translated from Arabic means "brave," is a 100 feet long and 20 feet wide yacht, that has been purpose built to provide a dining and entertaining experience for up to 150 people.

It is a steel construction made up of two decks, a small fiddle and quarter-deck. The upper deck offers an open area, which will be an ideal location for sunset cruises, cocktail receptions and barbecues. The lower deck is fully enclosed with picture windows, is fully air-conditioned and carpeted throughout. Wood panelling is a strong feature and complements the colour scheme of royal blue and touches of matt gold. The two twin engines have a maximum speed of 15 KT. There are two heads (toilets) on the main deck with another on the upper deck. Below deck will be used as a storage area.

A 21-FT speedboat with a 125 HP engine has also been purchased. This will be used as a ferry for guests to and from Shuja in case of late arrivals after sailing or necessary early departures. It will also be used to take guests to the islands on trips such as island picnics etc.

REUTERS The Business of Information

Table with 10 columns: Currency, USD, JOD, SAR, BAH, QAT, KUW, AED, LBP, EGP. Rows include US Dollar, DE Mark, GB Sterling, CH Franc, JP Yen, CA Dollar, IT Lira, NL Guilder, FR Franc.

Table with 10 columns: Currency, USD, JOD, SAR, BAH, QAT, KUW, AED, LBP, EGP. Rows include US Dollar, Jordan Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahrain Dinar, Qatar Dinar, Kuwait Dinar, Emiratis Dinar, Lebanese L1000, Egyptian.

Table with 10 columns: Currency, USD, JOD, SAR, BAH, QAT, KUW, AED, LBP, EGP. Rows include US Dollar, Jordan Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahrain Dinar, Qatar Dinar, Kuwait Dinar, Emiratis Dinar, Lebanese L1000, Egyptian.

Table with 10 columns: Currency, USD, JOD, SAR, BAH, QAT, KUW, AED, LBP, EGP. Rows include US Dollar, Jordan Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahrain Dinar, Qatar Dinar, Kuwait Dinar, Emiratis Dinar, Lebanese L1000, Egyptian.

Table with 10 columns: Currency, USD, JOD, SAR, BAH, QAT, KUW, AED, LBP, EGP. Rows include US Dollar, Jordan Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahrain Dinar, Qatar Dinar, Kuwait Dinar, Emiratis Dinar, Lebanese L1000, Egyptian.

Table with 10 columns: Currency, USD, JOD, SAR, BAH, QAT, KUW, AED, LBP, EGP. Rows include US Dollar, Jordan Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahrain Dinar, Qatar Dinar, Kuwait Dinar, Emiratis Dinar, Lebanese L1000, Egyptian.

JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE *** JORDAN MARKETPLACE

DAJANI Jewellers. Gems of the world 18-21 & 22 k. Gold. IN JORDAN - EGYPT & BRAZIL Amman, Amra Forum Hotel Shop 6th Circle.

Many villas and apartments for rent and sale furnished or unfurnished. Abdoun Real Estate. TEL: 5920605-5920609 FAX: 5932605 MOBILE: 079/30007

STUDIO HAIG Professional quality in 1 hour service. Develop your colour film at our shop and get: * JUMBO photo size 30% larger. * Free enlargement 20 x 30 cm. Shmeisani - Opposite Grindlays Bank. Phone: 604042 Sweifish Tel: 823891

CROWN HOTEL. INDOOR HEATED SWIMMING POOL. SAUNA. JACUZZI & MASSAGE. FITNESS ROOM. TENNIS & SQUASH COURTS. Tel: 758180 Radio & TV station RD.

FOR RENT Apartments & Villas Deluxe in Amman. SANABEL Real Estate. Sweifiyeh Hajarat Complex. Tel: 864230 - 865167

Crystal Quality Serviced Suites. One & Two Bedrooms * Fully Equipped Kitchens * Daily & Long Stay * Reasonable Rates. 5th Circle. Tel: 692672 Fax 674551

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL 667171 EXT. 223 OR 684311 - 699634 EXT. 42

TO ADVERTISE IN THIS SECTION CALL 667171 EXT. 223 OR 684311 - 699634 EXT. 42

Australian Open

Out go Muster, Ivanisevic and Henman but Rafter survives



Austria's Thomas Muster throws his arms up in frustration during his first round loss to Sweden's Jan Apell at the Australian Open. Apell defeated Muster in straight sets 6-4 7-6 7-5 (Reuters photo)

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Upstart challengers dumped men's seeds Thomas Muster and Goran Ivanisevic at the Australian Open on Tuesday while British hero Tim Henman was beaten in a five-set five-hour thriller.

Australia's World No. 2 Pat Rafter was embroiled in a draining four-set struggle before surviving against tenacious American Jeff Tarango in the night match.

But there were no problems for women's No. 1 Martina Hingis, or men's third seed Michael Chang and a host of other top names.

But World 243 ranked Jan Apell of Sweden stunned eighth seed Muster with a 6-4, 7-6, 7-5 victory in 122 minutes on court two of Flinders Park filled by a record 33,741 people.

The 30-year-old Muster, a semi-finalist here last year blamed "bad timing" for his defeat. "But this is not the end," added the Austrian, who covets another French Open title on clay.

His 29-year-old opponent, who has never got past the second round in a Grand Slam, could not believe his luck.



Australia's Pat Rafter plays a volley in his first round match against Jeff Tarango of the United States at the Australian Open in Melbourne January 20. Rafter is seeded number two for this grand slam tournament (Reuters photo)

"I had so many chances to close it off, but I couldn't so when I got the match point and he missed it was a great relief," said Apell.

Ivanisevic, the 13th seed from Croatia, risked a 10,000 U.S. fine for missing a press conference after his 6-2, 7-6, 3-6, 6-4 defeat by Jan Siemerink of the Netherlands, the world number 71.

He did the same thing at Wimbledon last year and the Grand Slam committee are not expected to be lenient with the hot-headed Ivanisevic when they apply higher fine levels introduced on January 1.

Jerome Golmard of France was the third hero of the day, beating Britain's Henman 6-3, 6-7, 6-2, 3-6, 11-9. Their battle lasted one minute short of five hours — just 12 minutes short of the record

cramping... I've got to learn to remain a lot calmer. I get too intense."

Tarango described one of his best matches as a classic. "I wanted to be like a pit bull and fight and scrap and wait for the opportunity," he added.

Asked if Rafter could win the tournament, Tarango said: "No, he has tapped into some of his reserves and hopefully I've done my countrymen a service here tonight."

Fifth seed Greg Rusedski kept Britain and the power servers in contention by beating American qualifier David Wu 7-6, 6-3, 6-4.

The two used to play each other in juniors when Wu was the big server with a reputation and Rusedski said he was "a drifter." Rusedski was beaten in the



France's Mary Pierce plays a backhand shot during her first round match against China's Fang Li at the Australian Open in Melbourne. Pierce won in straight sets 6-0 6-0 (Reuters photo)

Australian Open match between Boris Becker and Omar Camporese six years ago.

Golmard, 24, sought treatment for a blood blister under a nail on his foot during the final set. But it was Henman, the World No. 19, who had to fight off three match points, two trailing at 6-7 and another with Golmard leading 10-9.

At the end of the 83 minute set Henman said: "That was my worst performance for sure."

Rafter had to fight all the way in the gruelling three hour 27 minute first round match before coming out on top over Tarango, 7-6, 7-6, 6-7, 7-5.

"That took a lot out of me, both physically and emotionally," Rafter said. "I had to take electrolyte tablets for

first round at the Australian Open last year. But in that time his world ranking has shot up from 62 to No. 6.

Michael Chang, the American-Chinese third seed, needed three hours and two minutes to beat Denmark's Kenneth Carlsen 6-3, 7-6, 5-7, 6-3.

Women's number one Hingis eased into the second round by beating Wilrud Probst of Germany 6-1, 6-2 in a quickfire 53 minutes.

Her victory means both the top seeds are safely past the first round. Men's favourite Pete Sampras qualified on Monday.

Amanda Coetzer, the third seed from South Africa, beat Barbara Paulus of Austria 6-2, 6-0. Fifth seed Mary Pierce saw off Chinese challenger Li Fang 6-0, 6-0.



Andre Agassi

Agassi advances, looks forward to top form tennis

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Fallen World No.1 Andre Agassi believes he is about to step up his game after a year in the tennis doldrums.

Agassi, who ventured into the satellite Challengers tour to rediscover his lost brilliance that earned him Wimbledon, U.S. and Australian Open titles, overcame a first-set loss before winning his first round match at the Australian Open here Tuesday.

He took out Italian qualifier Marzio Martelli, 3-6, 7-6, 6-2, 6-2 in 142 minutes and will now play 16th seeded Spaniard Albert Costa.

Agassi, who was World No.1 for 30 weeks before relinquishing it to Pete Sampras in November 1995, plummeted to 141 in the rankings on November 10 last year.

He resorted to playing in the Las Vegas Challenger where he reached the final to get into a winning frame of mind.

The flamboyant American said he was nervous in his first match at the Australian Open.

"I played cautiously and I didn't find my rhythm until after the second set," he said. "In the tiebreaker I had to step it up and then I started hitting my shots a lot bigger and put the match on my terms."

Agassi, whose ongoing commitment to the game has waxed and waned in his 13 rollercoaster years on the circuit, spoke afterwards of his desire to return to big-time tennis.

"I feel like I'm right there, ready to step it up, but I've got to do it now and it's good that I'm still in the tournament. I've got to get out there and play big-time tennis and it's going to happen."

Agassi said playing in the Challengers was necessary for him to revive his career.

"I had to find guys who were on my level and play against them and beat them, and to be honest it felt good winning again. Players gave me the respect for being willing to make that step down, but to me it was a simple, practical and necessary step that had to be made if I wanted to keep playing and I did."

Agassi said the last thing on his mind while playing in the peripheral tournament was that he was a former No.1.

"I'm a very intense, all-consuming type of person and when I get into something it becomes important to me. I get very single-minded, very detail-oriented."

Agassi equated playing in the year's opening grand slam to the satellite circuit as being, "real turkey here and processed turkey in the Challengers."

"There are good players all through the rankings and I just had to pay the price for getting my game back to where it needs to be. It's one step at a time and I'm certainly a lot further down the road than I was a month ago."

In what will only be borne out by his future results, the 27-year-old Agassi said: "I'm motivated to enjoy tennis now, I've been through it, I've seen it from all different sides and this time around I couldn't feel stronger about the way I feel for just getting out there."

"I'm in my best shape than I've ever been in, so if I can be stronger physically there's no reason why I can't be better than I've been."

"Two years ago I was down here in the same tournament and I was ranked number two in the world and you've got no idea how far my mind was from the game and now I'm in an opposite situation, this is something I'm committed to."

SCOREBOARD

NBA			
New York	98	Boston	82
Philadelphia	98	Sacramento	85
Minnesota	117	LA Clippers	109
LA Lakers	92	Orlando	89
Charlotte	109	Toronto	88
New Jersey	95	San Antonio	84
Seattle	114	Houston	80
Utah	98	Detroit	89

Portuguese championship

Sporting Lisbon 1 Sporting Braga 1

Spanish First Division

Valencia 4 Barcelona 3

English Premiership

Southampton 1 Man. Utd 0

ATP RANKINGS

PARIS (AFP) — Here are the leading ATP men's tennis rankings:

1. Pete Sampras (USA)	4547 pts
2. Patrick Rafter (Aus)	3250
3. Michael Chang (USA)	3189
4. Jonas Bjorkman (Swe)	2870
5. Yevgeny Kafelnikov (Rus)	2690
6. Greg Rusedski (Gbr)	2660
7. Petr Korda (Cze)	2495
8. Marcelo Rios (Chi)	2446
9. Carlos Moya (Spa)	2374
10. Thomas Muster (Aut)	2326
11. Richard Krajicek (Ned)	2299
12. Sergi Bruguera (Spa)	2280
13. Alex Corretja (Spa)	2275
14. Gustavo Kuerten (Bra)	2215
15. Goran Ivanisevic (Cro)	2211
16. Felix Mantilla (Spa)	2153
17. Mark Philippoussis (Aus)	1809
18. Tim Henman (Gbr)	1782
19. Albert Costa (Spa)	1749
20. Karol Kucera (Svk)	1569
21. Cedric Pioline (Fra)	1534
22. Fabrice Santoro (Fra)	1480
23. Magnus Norman (Swe)	1450
24. Andre Medvedev (Ukr)	1437
25. Alberto Berasategui (Spa)	1427
26. Thomas Enqvist (Swe)	1355
27. Magnus Larsson (Swe)	1333
28. Jim Courier (USA)	1266
29. Nicolas Pietrangeli (Ger)	1249
30. Marc Rosset (Svi)	1236

WTA RANKINGS

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Women's tennis rankings issued in Miami, Florida Monday:

1. Martina Hingis (Svi)	6264 pts
2. Jana Novotna (Cze)	3753
3. Lindsay Davenport (USA)	3696
4. Amanda Coetzer (Rsa)	3360
5. Monica Seles (USA)	2988
6. Iva Majoli (Cro)	2874
7. Mary Pierce (Fra)	2861
8. Irina Spirlea (Rom)	2577
9. Arantxa Sanchez (Spa)	2361
10. Mary Jo Fernandez (USA)	2114
11. Nathalie Tauziat (Fra)	2003
12. Conchita Martinez (Spa)	1988
13. Sandrine Testud (Fra)	1841
14. Anke Huber (Ger)	1829
15. Brenda S.-McCarthy (Ned)	1543
16. Sabine Appelmans (Bel)	1502
17. Lisa Raymond (USA)	1437
18. Dominique Van Roost (Bel)	1394
19. Ruxandra Dragomir (Rom)	1333
20. Ai Sugiyama (Jpn)	1252



Seattle SuperSonics' Jim McIlvaine (R) rebounds over Houston Rockets' Kevin Willis (C) and Charles Barkley (L) during fourth quarter action, January 19. The SuperSonics beat the Rockets 114-80 at the Compaq Center in Houston (Reuters photo)

ATP, WTA tours to hold money summit

MELBOURNE (AFP) — The heads of men's and women's tennis tours will hold a summit at the Australian Open here this week with women again pressing for prize money parity.

Increasing the number of tournaments in which men and women play together could also be on the agenda, officials said Tuesday.

But the new head of the Women's Tennis Association (WTA), Bart McGuire, finds his bargaining position weakened by squabbling between the top female professionals and rank and file members over the shareout of cash rewards.

McGuire, who became the WTA chief executive last week after Ric Clarson suddenly withdrew, will have his first official meeting with his Association of Tennis Professionals (ATP) counterpart Mark Miles, although the date has been kept secret.

Top women players have been campaigning for prize equality since the early 1970s when Billie-Jean King led the fight.

"I am tempted to say that equal prize money is not enough

at this point, but I probably won't stick to that position," said McGuire referring to the increasing popularity of the women's game caused by the rise of teenage stars.

McGuire said the women's finals beat the men's finals in the international television rankings at the last Wimbledon, U.S. Open and French Open.

"It seems a little odd to have less than equal prize money for the women," he said.

The U.S. Open has equal money, but McGuire said he would be speaking to Geoff Pollard, head of Tennis Australia, and the heads of Wimbledon and the French Open and any other combined events about money and giving equal facilities.

Top players like Martina Hingis have said they would like to see around three or four more joint events outside the Grand Slams where there are men's and women's contests.

Outside the four majors, the only mixed events are Key Biscayne and Indian Wells in the United States and Sydney. McGuire said he had an "open mind" on whether there should be more events but indicated that there were many problems, including "preserving the identity of the

women's game as a women's game."

But the women's case in negotiations will be weakened by divisions within their union. There has even been talk of top women players breaking away to form their own association and the dispute over sharing prize money and tournament access is going through the U.S. courts.

"There is inherently a difference between very top players and other players on prize money," said McGuire, a top lawyer with close connections to the game.

"There is certainly more concern among the lower ranking players on playing opportunities, on how big the draws are, on how many tournaments there are."

McGuire said he was optimistic the split would be healed. "I don't know how quickly, but I'm sure it will be resolved."

"My hope is that the players will resolve this themselves so they can have an association that represents all of the players."

"I think that the top players recognise some of the problems that have been raised by the lower ranking players and are prepared to deal with them," he said.

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 634144	CINEMA TEL: 634144	CINEMA TEL: 699238	CINEMA TEL: 677420	CINEMA TEL: 079 33430	CINEMA TEL: 079 33430	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 625155
	PHILADELPHIA "1"	PHILADELPHIA "2"	PLAZA	CONCORD	GALLERIA 2	GALLERIA 1	
	BULLETPROOF	George Clooney Nicole Kidman... in THE PEACEMAKER	NOTHING TO LOSE	Nadya Al Jundi, Ahmad Bedeir & Nahla Salameh... in RIDING HIGH	ABDOUN	ABDOUN Salma Hayek... in FOOLS RUSH IN	NOW ON DAILY THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas
	Shows: 12:30, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 2:15, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:00, 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:15, 2:15, 6:15, 8:15, 10:30	Shows: 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 2:00, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30	For reservations call: 640155, 625155

Weah on the way out

MILAN (AFP) — George Weah could be leaving AC Milan at the end of the season, following a row with coach Fabio Capello over the Liberian striker's back injury.

Weah, who is under contract until 2000, suffered a discal hernia while pumping a 300km weight in the gym at Milan's training headquarters on December 3. He spent Christmas in Liberia and had surgery here on December 30.

The row started last week, when Weah asked for a couple of weeks' leave to return to Liberia, albeit continuing his treatment. Capello refused, saying Weah was to blame for making his injury worse by having treatment from the wrong people in Liberia.

Weah, who joined AC Milan in 1995, countered Capello's claim and the two men had a summit meeting on Monday.

Capello said: "We had a meeting with the player and the team's medical staff and Weah has agreed to stay here until the doctors have decided that he is well again and has no more problems."

"For the moment, he is continuing his physiotherapy and rehabilitation. The affair is now closed."

A disconsolate Weah emerged from the meeting saying: "I don't think I'll be going back to Liberia."

However, relations between player and club have clearly suffered and many here believe the damage will be lasting.

Weah, FIFA's former Player of the Year, was sought last year by Arsenal coach Arsene Wenger, who launched the Liberian's career at Monaco.

The 31-year-old striker has been rated at 10 billion (\$5.5 million) to 15 billion lira (\$8 million).

Klim gets superstar treatment, hires bodyguard

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Michael Klim, the new golden boy of world swimming, got the superstar treatment Tuesday and promptly hired a bodyguard to keep his overzealous fans at bay.

Klim, 20, may not consider himself one of swimming's all-time greats but the shrieking teenage girls and curious shoppers who welcomed him back to his home town here Tuesday would say otherwise.

After his seven-medal haul at the Perth World Swimming Championships, the shaven-headed Australian has become the world's most feted swimmer.

His appearance at a Melbourne shopping centre matched the hysteria witnessed here last week when pop band The Spice Girls sent fans wild.

He was flanked by security guards to allow him to make his way through the masses, made up primarily of teenage girls anxious to catch a glimpse of their new heart-throb.

The 20-year-old was clearly taken back by the attention.

"The public at the meet were very supportive but I didn't realise that it had spread around the country, it's amazing," he said.

"I wasn't really expecting anything like that. I guess it's something I might have to get used to, but I'm sure it's going to spur

me on to greater and better things."

Klim's four gold, two silver and one bronze medals made him the greatest male swimmer in world championship history but he has maintained a level head and said he won't get carried away.

"I don't think there is a reason for me to change because I have won a couple of races at a swim meet," the Polish-born Klim said.

"I'm in swimming because I enjoy it and I have fun. It doesn't change my life. My personality is not going to change. I don't mind shaking a few hands because that comes with a bit of success but I think I can keep doing the normal things in life."

His phenomenal success has also led to more than 25 companies making approaches to sponsor him.

But the director of his management group, Rob Woodhouse, said Klim would knock back more than 20 of the lucrative sponsorship deals and restrict full marketing rights to just four.

"We don't want to overcommit him and we don't him to become a walking billboard," said Woodhouse, a former Olympic swimmer.

He said he expected sponsorships to earn Klim about A\$1 million (\$670,000) next year.

English Premier League club set up Aussie training schools

SYDNEY (AFP) — English Premier League club West Ham United are setting up two Australian training schools to tap the emerging Aussie football talent. West Ham boss Peter Storie said here Tuesday.

Storie said he believed the initiative would be the first of many set up by major overseas clubs to groom talent from down under.

"Other clubs such as Barcelona and Real Madrid want to try this," he said.

"I think one or two clubs are trying to quickly get something organised."

Storie and youth team coach Tony Carr are here to oversee the opening of academies in Perth and Sydney.

Australia is already a major supplier of talent to English football and West Ham, which already has a strong home youth scheme, has stolen a march on other clubs with its initiative here, Storie said.

"A lot of people have been surprised at the way this has been so well accepted back in Britain."

He said he would be making regular trips to Australia to monitor the progress of the

training schools, which will cater for boys aged 16 years and under.

"It's not something that's going to happen in one moment. It's a long-term project."

Storie said Australia was a tempting market because it had a love of football through its European links and physically advanced teenagers because of their outdoor lifestyle.

"One of the merits of the Australians is the strong fitness orientation," he said. "You can see that straight away. We've had a few experiences with the Romanians that didn't work out, so we've become more selective in areas like that."

Storie said the academies would help boost football stocks in both countries.

"This is one area that we can do good things — help ourselves and to improve Australian football."

"Five to 10 years ago, no one would have thought Australian football would be at the level it is today. It is impressive; the way it has gone forward and it looks set to get even stronger."

Saints stun United for 3rd time

SOUTHAMPTON (AFP) — Southampton's Kevin Davies breathed fresh life into the race for the Premiership title by consigning leaders Manchester United to a shock 1-0 defeat here at the Dell on Monday.

Davies' exquisite third minute header proved enough to send the reigning champions crashing to just their fourth defeat of the season as lowly Saints made it three home wins in succession against England's most formidable team.

The Southampton striker hobbled off the pitch 15 minutes later after twisting an ankle, but his one significant contribution to the game proved decisive and could ultimately have a major say in the destiny of the title.

United, who were thrashed 6-3 last season and 3-1 the year before, were hoping to slam the door on their title rivals with victory over the relegation-haunted club.

But Saints were fired up for the occasion and never let Alex Ferguson's side get into their stride, chasing every ball and throwing themselves into tackles with a ferocity that clearly rattled their illustrious opponents.

Defeat for United means that what

could have been an eight point lead over Blackburn at the top remains just five, with 15 games remaining.

Southampton took a shock lead after just three minutes when former England star Matt Le Tissier floated an innocuous-looking free kick from the left towards the edge of the United area.

But just as the ball reached the box, United midfielder Nicky Butt lost his footing allowing Davies to pounce with a glancing header into the bottom left of Peter Schmeichel's goal.

The capacity crowd inside in the Dell erupted in delight before producing a sustained rendition of "We Want Seven" in reference to last season's astonishing 6-3 victory over United.

Such was Southampton's domination of the reigning champions that the visitors failed to muster a single shot on goal in the first half, restricting them to just a handful of chances.

United, though, turned up the pressure in the 10 minutes before the break and should have equalised when Giggs caused havoc in the Southampton defence only for Andy Cole to squander a clear chance by firing wide of the mark.

Cole was guilty of another glaring miss moments later when Giggs, again the supplier, crossed from the left only for the United striker to head wide from six yards with only Saints goalkeeper Paul Jones to beat.

United, without calf strain victim Teddy Sheringham, started the second half as they had finished the first with a siege on the Southampton goal.

David Beckham forced Jones into action after 58 minutes with a bending free kick from 25 yards out and almost scored 10 minutes later with another attempt from an identical position.

Beckham beat Jones on this occasion but his curling effort crashed off the cross bar.

Cole almost forced an equaliser on 85 minutes when his close range stab was brilliantly beaten out by Jones.

With the match heading into injury time, Jones then produced another astonishing save to deny Paul Scholes as Southampton hung on for another famous victory.

Barcelona in deja-vu 4-3 defeat

MADRID (AFP) — Barcelona surrendered a 3-0 home lead to lose 4-3 to Valencia through a last-minute goal from Argentina's Ariel Ortega in a case of deja-vu to stay second in the Spanish title race on Monday.

Real Madrid were booed and jeered by their fans as they snatched an unimpressive 1-0 victory over modest Salamanca Sunday to go top of the Spanish first division.

And Barcelona's incredible Nou Camp slip left Real with 43 points from 21 matches while Barcelona have 41 from only 20.

Luis Enrique put Barcelona ahead in the 33rd minute and the Brazilian Rivaldo put them 2-0 up five minutes after the break. Barcelona coach Luis Van Gaal was surely beaming when an own goal by Argentina's Fernando Caceres put them three goals up just three minutes later.

However second half goals from Argentinians Guillermo Morici, Claudio Lopez (2) and Ortega in the dying seconds meant it was yet another example of Barcelona giving away a major lead to lose 4-3.

Two weeks ago, Salamanca scored three goals in the last 10 minutes to come back from 1-3 down to win by the same score. The Real victory was due to Italian striker Christian Panucci who managed to score the only goal of the encounter after 21 minutes.

It was also his first goal since joining the legendary Spanish club twelve months ago. In other important matches, Athletic Bilbao were held to a 0-0 draw by Real Betis but stay in fourth place in the standings — equal on points with Real Sociedad who slumped to a 3-1 defeat — their first loss in 18 matches — at Racing Santander.



Barcelona's striker Luis Enrique Martinez (R) battles for the ball with Valencia's goalkeeper Andoni Zubizarreta (L) and Serbian Miroslav Djukic (C) during the Spanish First Division match at Nou Camp stadium. Valencia beat Barcelona 4-3 (Reuters photo)

LOST LENS

Canon Wide Angle Lens, Model J9ax5.2B3, Serial No. 11884, Inventory No. 510778, all encased in a silver metal case approximately 35 x 22 x 20 cm. This Lens is The Property of CBS

If Found Please Contact 856 176, or Nearest Police Station for reward.



JD 39.000 per person

Including

- Accommodation in a luxury double/twin room.
- Famous Mövenpick breakfast & dinner buffet with live cooking.
- Free use of game & billiard room and health club.

For Children

- Children under 12 years are free of charge when sharing their parents' room, including meals (max. 2 children per room, no extra bed).
- JD 59.000 double/twin room for children, including meals (max. 4 children per room, no extra bed).
- Kindergarten with sandy ground and very exciting games.
- Fun factory with table tennis, darts, baby football & billiard.

Supplement

- JD 20.000 extra for single accommodation.

Validity

- Offer valid from 27 January to 6 February, 1998 for Jordanians and foreign residents in Jordan only.

Reservation

- Please contact our reservation office in Petra for reservation or further information.

MÖVENPICK
RESORT

PETRA

Tel: 03 215 7111
Fax: 03 215 7112

Lewis-Holyfield fight may yet go ahead

LONDON (AFP) — Lennox Lewis may yet fight Evander Holyfield in a world heavyweight title unification fight, Holyfield's promoter Don King says.

King has hit back at claims by Seth Abraham, head of American pay-per-view network HBO, that he deliberately snubbed the fight by asking for too much money, claiming he wants the contest to go ahead in September.

In a report in the Times, King said: "I want to put Holyfield-Lewis on this year in September, after they have finished with their commitments."

"The Holyfield v Tyson fight can go on even if Holyfield loses to Lewis. The public will always want to see Tyson fight Holyfield."

King also denied that initial talks between the Lewis and Holyfield camps broke down because King wanted at least 8 million dollars for himself out of the deal.

Lewis' promoters have arranged a defence of his WBC heavyweight title against George Foreman's conqueror Shannon Briggs in Atlantic City on March 28.

Holyfield, who also has mandatory commitments for his IBF and WBA versions of the title, has been pencilled in to defend against Francois Botha in South Africa.

Morocco finalise World Cup warm-up

RABAT (AFP) — Morocco's French coach Henri Michel revealed his side's programme of warm-up friendlies for the World Cup finals on Monday.

Michel, who coached France to the 1986 World Cup semi-finals and was in charge of Cameroon at the 1994 finals, said that he would mainly rely on the forthcoming African Nations Cup, which begins in Burkina Faso on February 7. Morocco will also play host to France, Belgium and England for the King Hassan II Cup, which will be played in Casablanca on May 16 and 17 — the three World Cup finalists confirmed their participation recently it was announced by the Royal Moroccan Football Federation.

Michel added that apart from a friendly with Chile in Avignon, France, on June 4 he would base the rest of his team's preparations on how they fared in the Nations Cup. At the World Cup finals Morocco have been drawn in Group One along with Brazil, Norway and Scotland.

Makinen crashes out

MONACO (AFP) — World champion Tommi Makinen pulled out while leading the Monte Carlo Rally on Tuesday after crashing in Tuesday's first special stage.

"I always said anything could happen in this rally," the Fin said after getting out of his Mitsubishi Lancer and leaving Spaniard Carlos Sainz in the lead in his Toyota Corolla.

Makinen, aiming for a hat-trick of world titles this year, has never won the Monte Carlo Rally.

He was leading last year when the wrong choice of tyres on the final overnight stage cost him victory.

Four-time world champion Juhani Kankkunen of Finland, in a Ford Escort WRC, was second and Britain's Richard Burns, in a Mitsubishi, was third overall.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TARIK HIRSH

TOO MANY LINES

Both vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ 87
♥ Q43
♦ 38
♣ A Q J 10 6 5

WEST
♠ K J 10 3
♥ 8 8
♦ Q 10 8 8 4
♣ K 2

EAST
♠ 9 6 5 4
♥ Q J 10
♦ 3 2
♣ 9 8 7 5

SOUTH
♠ A Q 2
♥ A 8 7 5 2
♦ A K 7 5
♣ A 4

The bidding: NORTH EAST SOUTH WEST
Pass Pass 10 Pass
2♣ Pass 20 Pass
2♦ Pass 40 Pass

Opening lead: Eight of ♣

This deal, from the Forde International tournament played in Scheveningen, Holland, in February, proved too much for most of the experts in the event.

Four hearts was the contract at all tables, reached on auctions such as the above. North's two clubs as the above. North's two clubs as the above. North's two clubs as the above.

After North showed a minimum for

J.T. FAX:
696183

FOR RENT

Furnished and Unfurnished Apartments
Two bedrooms and three bedrooms.
C.H. and telephones.
Location: Shmeisani near Birds Garden
(10 Abdul Haleem Al Nimr Street)
Tel: 667862 - 079/50504

FOR SALE

DUTY UNPAID CAR
Fiat Croma, 1993, automatic, 2000 cc.
88,000 km, full options. Price: JD3,250.
Contact Mr. Azamat, Russian Embassy.
Tel.: 641158, 641229 & 602322 (residence)

FOR U.N., DIPLOMATIC MISSION & FOREIGN COMPANIES

- A whole floor in a 4-floor beautiful building located in a quiet area in Umm Al Summaq. Three bedrooms, fully furnished, every thing to make a home. Rent: JD12,000 per annum.
- Two-bedroom apartment (ground floor). Exquisitely furnished. Rent: JD4,000 per annum.

Please call: 5528099-5520377

Arafat, World Bank chief sign investment accord

PARIS (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and World Bank President James Wolfensohn signed here Tuesday an agreement for an investment fund to promote Israeli and Palestinian investment in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

Mr. Wolfensohn said this was a "unique" agreement involving the bank because it combines Israeli and Palestinian private investment for Gaza and the West Bank.

Mr. Arafat said the agreement marked an important step, stressing "there is no doubt about our determination to achieve peace and our determination to foster the relationship between the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples, despite all the obstacles and difficulties we are facing."

The Peace Technology Fund, the first venture of its kind, combines the World Bank's private sector agency, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), along with Palestinian and Israeli investors.

"We are very proud to be associated with this Fund, which is the first of its kind to promote investment opportunities involving the Palestinian and Israeli business communities," Mr. Wolfensohn said.

The PTF will create business opportunities, reduce unemployment through job-creating investments, open new markets and increase foreign exchange earnings.

"We view it as a very positive development on the road to peace and prosperity in the region."

The Peres Centre for Peace,

founded by former left-wing Israeli Premier Shimon Peres, and the Capital and Evergreen groups representing Palestinian, Israeli and international investors are the IFC's partners in the fund.

The fund, with an initial capital of \$100 million, is intended to provide a source of private capital for businesses in the Palestinian self-rule territories and encourage Israeli-Palestinian joint ventures.

The World Bank has warned of a large fall in private investment in Gaza and the West Bank, along with a sharp decline in the standard of living of Palestinians, because of the deadlock in the Middle East peace process.

The PTF, was created on the initiative of Israeli investors and seeks to boost the private sector in Gaza and the West Bank, notably through Israeli-Palestinian joint ventures.

The fund, which could be increased later to \$200 million, will be jointly administered by the IFC, the Palestinian-Israeli investment group Capital Investments Ltd and the Evergreen Canada-Israel Management Corporation.

Mr. Peres, whose Peres Centre for Peace is supporting the fund, also attended the Paris signing ceremony.

The PTF already has \$50 million at its disposal, with Capital and Evergreen each putting in \$20 million and the IFC \$10 million.

Evergreen will be seeking investment from Israeli companies.

"All the Israeli banks, except

one, and the holding companies of Israel's two largest conglomerates (Clal and Knowl) have decided to take part in this fund," an Evergreen official said.

They are being invited to invest in one-million-dollar amounts.

Capital will be seeking investors in Arab countries and among Palestinians living outside the area.

Industrial countries will be asked to contribute to the capital.

Although the economy in the Palestinian territories is in grave difficulties, some areas have good growth potential, such as telecommunications, the fund's managers say.

Donors to the Palestinian self-rule authority pledged in mid-December to contribute \$750 million to its development projects for 1998.

A further donation of around \$150 million in the form of guarantees for private Palestinian investments was also announced.

The IFC has approved \$36.8 million in financing for nine investments in the West Bank and Gaza, one in 1994 and the rest in 1997, while independent investors have provided \$162 million for the projects, which include setting up a bank and an industrial park.

Mr. Arafat was in Paris Tuesday to sign the investment accord and to meet with French President Jacques Chirac before travelling to Washington for talks with U.S. President Bill Clinton on Thursday.



CAMEL X LLAMA — CAMEL: Dr. Lulu Skidmore poses with Rama, the first ever cross between a camel and a llama while an attendant holds on to the parents of the new animal on Tuesday. The new male animal, called a cama, was born last Wednesday at the Camel Reproduction Center in Dubai. Dr. Skidmore achieved the artificial insemination that created Rama after a two-year effort. The camel and the llama descend from the same species that lived 30 million years ago (AP photo)

Butler awaits Iraq's response to French proposal on 'off-limits' sites

Iraq says experts will take part next month in first of 'technical evaluation' meetings on missile warheads, VX chemical agents

BAGHDAD (AFP) — U.N. disarmament chief Richard Butler said here Tuesday he was awaiting Iraq's response to a French proposal on breaking a deadlock over access to presidential sites for his arms inspectors.

"I mentioned the French suggestion that... inspections of palaces, were that to occur... could involve inspectors being accompanied by representatives of the (U.N.) Security Council," Mr. Butler told AFP ahead of a final session of scheduled talks with Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz.

"The government of Iraq will give us their decision this evening" on the issue of presidential sites, which Iraq has so far pledged to keep off-limits to U.N. inspectors, he said.

"My desired position is to be able to go back to the Security Council and say our access has been preserved and Iraq is prepared to ensure that, with respect to presidential sites if we were to mount our inspections there... in a way that is sensitive to their dignity... accompanied by members of the Security Council," said Mr. Butler.

But he stressed that the Security Council representatives would just be present, have no role in the actual inspection, and that "there can't be any reduction in our right to inspect."

Mr. Butler and Mr. Aziz moved a step closer Tuesday to resolving their crisis with a deal to assess progress in disarmament Iraq, the official INA news agency said.

As Mr. Butler and Mr. Aziz met, thousands of Iraqis took to the streets waving to fight if U.S. forces should attack their country, while the Iraqi media accused Mr. Butler of provoking the dispute.

INA said the two men agreed that experts from the five permanent U.N. Security Council members and Germany will take part next month in the first of a series of "technical evaluation" meetings on missile warheads and VX chemical agents.

But it gave no specific date or venue for the first meeting, proposed by Iraq which argues that it has met Security Council demands for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction and long-range missiles, the condition for lifting seven-year-old sanctions.

The creation of such a committee follows Iraq complaints that the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) on disarmament Iraq is biased because it is dominated by American and British experts.

But there was no immediate comment from UNSCOM on the INA report.

Mr. Butler, UNSCOM's chairman, arrived here Monday after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein threatened to set a six-month deadline for inspectors to finish their work unless the embargo, imposed after Baghdad's August 1990 invasion of Kuwait, is lifted.

Mr. Butler told reporters on Monday that the evaluation meetings would start in two weeks, grouping international experts with Iraqi officials and UNSCOM members.

Iraq had requested assessment by outside experts as a "log-jam breaker," he said, but added that the area of Iraq's arms programme that is of most concern to UNSCOM, biological weapons, was "not ripe" for an evaluation meeting.

Iraq regards China, France and Russia as its backers with-

ing the dispute. In the Security Council, while the United States and Britain take a hard-line against Baghdad, Mr. Butler was accompanied to the talks by his deputy, Charles Duelfer, and UNSCOM commissioners from Canada, China and Italy as well as Nikita Smidovich of Russia, the chief ballistic missiles inspector.

Iraqi Oil Minister General Amer Mohammed Al Rashid and Amer Saadi, an adviser to Mr. Hussein, were in the Iraqi team. Mr. Butler said earlier that only full Iraqi cooperation could lead to the completion of UNSCOM's mission and clear the way for the embargo to be lifted.

"This work can be done quite quickly with full Iraqi cooperation. It will end when it ends," said Mr. Butler, whose visit winds up on Wednesday.

But to set a six-month deadline, as Mr. Hussein threatened, would show "a degree of arbitrariness that makes no practical sense," he said.

As Mr. Aziz and Mr. Butler conferred Tuesday, thousands of Iraqi men and women pledged to volunteer to defend Iraq in case of U.S. military attack, at a demonstration that blasted U.N. arms inspectors as "agents of America."

"We are ready to sacrifice ourselves for our leader Saddam Hussein," chanted the crowd estimated at 5,000 people, raising their fists in the air. "We will chop off any hand which tries to touch Iraq." The protest was the latest in a series of rallies since Iraq marked the seventh anniversary on Saturday of the start of the Gulf war over Kuwait.

U.S. forces in Gulf ready to strike if necessary

ABOARD THE USS NIMITZ (AFP) — U.S. forces are ready to strike with force against Iraq if the U.N. Security Council fails to defuse a simmering row with Baghdad over arms inspections, a senior U.S. naval commander warned Tuesday.

"We are here, we are ready and we have great striking power," Rear Admiral John Nathman told journalists aboard the USS Nimitz aircraft carrier in the Gulf.

"The U.N. Security Council is trying to resolve the crisis peacefully but needs the leverage of the military option and that's what we are doing here," said Mr. Nathman, commander of one of two American naval task forces in the Gulf.

"We are within striking range of southern Iraq and we have tremendous capability," he added.

The Nimitz and its escort ships are one of two U.S. task forces that have been criss-crossing the northern Gulf since November. The other battle group is led by the aircraft carrier USS George Washington.

The Nimitz carries 100 aircraft which make around 100 sorties a day to enforce the "no-fly zone" imposed on southern Iraq in the aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war.

Khatami adopts more hostile tone against U.S.

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iranian President Mohammad Khatami attacked the United States Monday in a strident speech completely at odds with the soft tone he used in a television interview with the U.S.-based television network CNN earlier this month.

"Our revolution delivered us from the domination of this master and we no longer succumb," he said in a speech at the mausoleum of the late Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

"We have seen the most harm from the United States before and after the revolution," he said.

"Even today American statesmen treat us like a master. Their arrogant spirit has caused us a lot of trouble."

"Because it is a superpower, it allows itself to behave as it likes. It wants to impose its will on the world."

"American leaders are out of step with the time. This is not a world that can tolerate a master-servant relationship."

"We do not need for America to get along with us and help us."

Mr. Khatami's toughened tone followed a speech by Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, last Friday in which he threw cold water on speculation of a rapprochement with the United States raised by the president's "address to the American people" broadcast on

CNN on Jan. 8.

"Negotiations and relations with the bully American government are useless for us," Ayatollah Khamenei said. "It is even harmful for Iran and the international Islamic movement," he said in a speech that was widely seen as a warning that he would not countenance any change in his anti-U.S. line 18 years after U.S.-Iranian ties were cut.

Mr. Khatami took up the theme in his speech Monday insisting that Iran had developed its own resources and its own set of principles during the 1979 revolution and the 1980-88 war with Iraq.

"We will not give up our principles and values from the revolution and will not sacrifice our national interest for political gain," he said.

He said Washington's policy of "force" was completely at odds with Tehran's policy of seeking relations "based on mutual respect."

"Iran's policy is to remove tension with other countries and to seek better relations based on mutual respect."

"Those who have based their relations with others on force, even if they increase their pressures and multiply their sanctions, we will not give up our dignity."

Mr. Khatami recalled that International Quds (Jerusalem) Day, the day the Iranian government traditionally marks its soli-

darity with the Palestinians, was due to be held on Friday and insisted this year's celebrations would show that the legacy of the 1979 revolution was still alive in Iran.

"A pillar of our religion is to defend the oppressed, and which nation on earth is more oppressed than the people of Palestine are by the racist Zionist regime?" he asked.

Mr. Khatami condemned the U.S. government for "supporting this racist and bullying regime which is the centre of state terrorism."

His tone contrasted sharply with his CNN address when he had said that Iranians harboured no ill will towards the American people and had voiced "regret" that the taking of American hostages in 1979 "hurt the feelings of the great American people."

"Nothing should prevent dialogue and understanding between our two nations," he had said in the address, the first by an Iranian leader to the people of the United States since the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The address had raised hope that Mr. Khatami, a relative moderate who took office in August after a surprise landslide election victory in May, might overcome opposition from Islamic hardliners in the government and lay the foundations for a slow opening to the United States.

New Bond Brosnan casts Connery barb

HONG KONG (AFP) — Pierce Brosnan, latest James Bond incarnation, took a swipe at predecessor Sean Connery's reported desire to make another of the wildly successful films. "Maybe he needs the work... [or] maybe he's just all kind of teed off," Brosnan told a news conference here, adding it was "highly unlikely" screen veteran Connery would return to the coveted role. Co-star Michelle Yeoh, flanking Brosnan at the press conference, said she would like to break with the tradition of 007's leading women and feature in another of the films. "I'm trying to convince the producers," she added.

Travolta tops bill at Diana ball

LONDON (AFP) — American film star John Travolta and his actress wife Kelly Preston have been invited to the "Princess Ball," an event in aid of the charity fund commemorating the late Diana, Princess of Wales. Profits from the minimum \$800-a-head ball in Beverly Hills will be split between the Diana Fund and a Californian AIDS charity, the Evening Standard newspaper said. The ball, and an accompanying charity auction, will be held Mar. 21 — two days before the Oscar ceremonies. Diana once danced with Travolta during a visit to the United States with her then-husband Prince Charles.

Spice Girls setting up 'Girl Power Towers'

LONDON (AFP) — British pop sensations the Spice Girls are taking girl power to the limit and becoming their own bosses. After two months of trying to find a replacement for manager Simon Fuller, they've decided they don't actually need one. "They already have a lawyer, a PR and a personal assistant," one of their aides told the Sun. "The workload has been taken off their shoulders and all they have to worry about is the decision-making." Instead, the five-girl group are setting up their own base in London which they have imaginatively dubbed "Girl Power Towers."

Tiger Woods tees off with Philippine president

CLARK (AFP) — Golf star Tiger Woods taught Philippine President Fidel Ramos a few golf tips before teeing off with local talent to win an 18-hole exhibition match. "He was a very charming and capable player," Ramos said of the 22-year-old American, who shot to international fame with a precocious talent that saw him win the U.S. Masters in 1997. Ramos, a self-proclaimed golf buff, said that he had invited the young star "to keep [him] coming back to the Philippines."

Old corned beef gets rich price at British auction

LONDON (AFP) — Two cans of corned beef from World War II were sold at auction in Britain for \$45. "They must be the most expensive tins of corned beef in the world," said appraiser Carl Willows, who insisted that the contents were still edible. Canned in 1940, when it cost a shilling, the corned beef was part of a collection of old merchandise that was sold off at Diss, in eastern England.

Israeli Labour leader vows to protect settlement blocs

GUSH ETZION (AFP) — The head of Israel's opposition Labour Party, Ehud Barak, promised Tuesday that a future Labour government would maintain Israeli control over major blocs of Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

"We are in favour of maintaining settlement blocs like Gush Etzion under Israeli control," Mr. Barak told residents of this pocket of Jewish communities situated between Bethlehem and Hebron in the southern West Bank.

Mr. Barak, a former army chief of staff considered to

represent the right-wing of the Labour Party, also reaffirmed that a government under his leadership would reject "a return to the June 1967 borders" which defined Israel prior to its capture of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

But unlike the current right-wing prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, Mr. Barak said a Labour government would not seek to maintain small Jewish settlements isolated in the heart of Palestinian territory.

Mr. Netanyahu's cabinet last week adopted sweeping

guidelines for areas of the West Bank deemed vital to Israel's "national interests" — including settlements, major roads, unspecified military sites, water resources and Jewish holy places.

While the cabinet refrained from providing a map of such vital areas, most commentators said they amounted to at least 60 per cent of the West Bank and signalled the government's intention to keep control over most of the territory even under a final peace agreement with the Palestinians.

U.S. Holocaust museum reverses position on Arafat's planned visit

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The U.S. Memorial Holocaust Museum, reversing a previous decision, will invite Palestinian President Yasser Arafat to take a VIP tour of the facility later this week, the Washington Post said Tuesday.

Museum officials had prompted an outcry when they barred Mr. Arafat from making an official visit after some members of the U.S. Jewish community warned that Mr. Arafat was "Hitler incarnate," according to one official.

"When I make a mistake, I'm big enough to admit I made a mistake," Miles Lerman, chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Council that runs the museum, is quoted as saying. "The more I think about it the more I think the visit of Arafat to this museum will serve a good purpose for peace."

Mr. Arafat is set to meet with

U.S. President Bill Clinton at the White House on Thursday, two days after the president is to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a bid to restart the Middle East peace process.

It was unclear if Mr. Arafat would accept the offer. Museum officials said they have tentatively scheduled the visit for Friday.

The reversal comes days after the museum rebuffed what many saw as a gesture of reconciliation by Mr. Arafat. The idea for the visit had come from a U.S. State Department official.

On Sunday, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said on NBC Television that she thought it was "too bad" the museum had shut its doors to the Palestinian leader.

"We have many people say that it is important for Arafat to understand what was really

a defining moment in Jewish history, which is the Holocaust," she said.

For his part, Mr. Netanyahu said that if Mr. Arafat really wanted to make a significant gesture, he should order the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) to stop calling for the destruction of Israel.

"That would be a symbolic gesture that would tell us that the leader of the Palestinians is telling the Palestinian people: no more war, no more bloodshed," he said on CNN Sunday.

The Post said the Israeli government reacted "coldly" to the museum's reversal.

"If he's going to learn about the Holocaust, and if he's not going to deny it, then all the better," Lenny Ben David, deputy chief of mission at Israel's embassy in Washington, is quoted as saying.

Kach threatens Christian envoys to Hebron

HEBRON (AFP) — Far-right Jewish militants have made death threats against Christian American activists monitoring tensions in the divided West Bank city of Hebron, the Christian group said Tuesday.

The threats were faxed or sent by electronic mail to members of the Christian Peacemaker Team present in Hebron since June 1995 as part of a "violence reduction" mission by a group of U.S. Protestant congregations, members of the team said.

The threats were signed by

the outlawed anti-Arab movement Kach and were sent to the U.S. homes and offices of members of the Christian team. Kach was outlawed in 1994 after one of its supporters killed 29 Palestinian worshippers in a Hebron mosque.

In the messages, Kach said three members of the Christian team in Hebron "help and assist Arab terrorists" who have carried out fire-bomb and pipe-bomb attacks against the Jewish settler enclave in Hebron.

"For their safety, the above-mentioned terrorists are advised

to depart from the land of Israel for their own countries in the next 96 hours," said the message, which was sent on Sunday, the Christian group said in a statement.

The message said that if the three foreigners did not leave Israel by Wednesday, "their lives will be in jeopardy."

The Christian Peacemaker Teams is an initiative of Mennonite and Quaker congregations which have dispatched what are described as "violence reduction missions" to trouble spots around the world.